Bhakti Yoga

Edwin F. Bryant

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TALES AND TEACHINGS FROM
THE BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA

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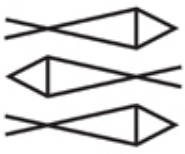

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Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāmābhyāṃ namaḥ

In honor and dear remembrance of my father, George Bryant, MBE,

for exemplifying *dharma* long before I encountered the concept in Sanskrit texts. I spent much time in his company as I worked on this

text. May he partake of any merit accruing from this work.

To my daughter, Mohinī, in case one day she ever wonders what this piece of her upbringing was really all about.

To my sister, Pia, for all her love and support, that she may gain

a clearer understanding of *bhakti yoga*. To Hannah Jackson, in case she ever becomes interested. And to all seekers interested in

knowing more about the spirituality associated with the

mischievous, lotus-eyed blue boy.

To my teachers and to all the *bhāgavatas* who have recorded, preserved, transmitted, and taught the wonderful *līlās* of *Bhagavān* across the ages. May they accept this little attempt to follow in their

footsteps and smile with kindness and good humor at all its imperfections.

And, nally, to Je Seroy and the folks at Farrar, Straus and

Giroux, for having faith in this project and being a great team to work with.

Introduction to the Volume

Statement of Purpose: Sources and Scope of the Volume

There are as many variegated expressions of *bhakti yoga* in India as there are sects, languages, communities, lineages, castes, regions, villages, and, indeed, human hearts wherein it ultimately resides.

This book is focused on one expression of *bhakti*: *Vaiṣṇava bhakti* centered on *Śrī* Kṛṣṇa as emerges in a sixteenth-century tradition. In this section, we discuss our vision and method for the volume and

provide some rationale and contextual background for the texts on

bhakti that we have chosen to feature. Our discussion in this introductory section may be mildly academic, but we have made

every e ort in the remainder of the volume to avoid scholarly

language and specialized jargon in preference for straightforward prose and concepts accessible for the educated but nonspecialized reader. In this work, we attempt to navigate that unattainable line

between producing something that is academically respectable,

accessible to the interested nonspecialist, and useful to the

intellectually responsible *yoga* practitioner. Since this is an impossible feat, I can only beg the indulgence both of scholars, who

may nd some of the discussion overly simplistic, and of lay

readers, whether personally involved with *yoga* practices or not, who may nd it too academic in places. In any event, anyone not

interested in this section's technicalities might prefer to proceed to

the next section, "De nition of *Bhakti*," where we begin our actual discussion on *bhakti* proper.

Speci cally, the tales and teachings in part 2 of this volume are

translations from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Beautiful Legend of* Bhagavān [God] (henceforth *Bhāgavata*), as are the stories of Kṛṣṇa in part 3. After much deliberation, we have chosen the

translation "legend" here for the Sanskrit term *purāṇa*, 1 with the intention of denoting traditional lore, which presents itself as factual history, is purported to be true by its followers, and has been handed down and believed as such by its adherents across the centuries. 2 The *Bhāgavata* is, as we will suggest later, arguably one of the most important texts on *bhakti yoga*, along with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in that cluster of traditions that has come to be known as

"Hinduism." 3 In addition to the text itself, the systematic analysis of *bhakti yoga*, which will occupy the bulk of part 1, will to a great extent be from the

perspective of the commentaries and elaborations

on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* written by the sixteenth-century

theologians Jīva Gosvāmī and his uncle Rūpa Gosvāmī, two of the

founding fathers of the Gauḍīya school of Vaiṣṇavism (also known

as Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism). 4 We will introduce these sources below.

While we will engage a wide variety of other intellectual and

theological expressions in India both prior and contemporary to the

sixteenth century, our motive will be to compare and contrast these

with our chosen case study.

Our aim in this volume is to provide the reader with a modest window into how *bhakti* is understood through the frame of reference of one community of practitioners in the premodern

period. Our interest in this book is in the theology of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*—

the beliefs, metaphysics, devotional attitudes, and, most especially,

yogic practices of this tradition—considered through the tradition's own categories and terminologies as presented by its adherents.5 We will be directing considerable attention to the soteriological goals of

the *Bhāgavata* tradition ("soteriology" is a term used to refer to the nature of religious beliefs pertaining to some sort of perfected afterlife—in the Indic6 context, *mokṣa*, the liberated state). This is a book intended for anyone with intellectual inclinations interested in exploring an expression of *bhakti* as a lived reality—as a map of how to navigate one's existence in this world, frame its ultimate

meaning, and conceive of that which lies beyond.

For my academic colleagues, I feel obliged to point out that this is

not an analysis of the social, political, or ideological contexts of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, nor of the material in uences that fed into its historical development —concerns that have come to dominate and,

in fact, more or less de ne the study of religion as an academic

discipline.7 These are all essential aspects of the study of any religion, as no tradition, howsoever spiritual, exists in a cultural vacuum, immune from being a ected by its sociopolitical

environment and devoid of any ideology of its own. But such

contexts and agendas will not concern us here. Thus, while our critics may accuse us of naive ahistoricism (that is, extracting a tradition from its historical setting in the real world), we wish to be

clear from the outset: our focus is on the theology and practices of a

tradition as conceptualized and articulated in the terms and

categories of the tradition itself. 8 (I have placed further comments pertaining to how I am framing this work in notes so as not to

burden this introduction.)9

We thus prioritize premodern traditional sources in this volume

(but we have included references to select academic studies in

notes). Our hope is that this focus a ords an opportunity to glimpse

one facet of the traditional Hindu universe of *bhakti* in India as expressed in a very important classical text10 and a major commentarial tradition prior to its encounter with modernity in the

colonial period. Our aim is for scholars and students of religion to

gain some understanding of the worldview and principal beliefs of

the Kṛṣṇa *bhakta* practitioner of this tradition, and for intellectually responsible *yoga* practitioners to get a better sense of the premodern rationale of a form of *bhakti* as a very speci c type of *yoga* practice.

As a result of our chosen focus, in addition to engaging an important

bhakti text, by an exposure to a traditional mode of understanding, interpreting, and reworking sacred scripture (hermeneutics), via

Jīva and Rūpa's commentarial writings and interpretations of the *Bhāgavata*, we will explore how an elaborate and sophisticated *bhakti* tradition sets about gaining authenticity for its teachings.

Foundational texts such as the *Bhāgavata* in ancient India are almost always studied through the lineage-based commentaries that are

written to clarify them, as well as to establish a sect's theological credentials.

Our contention is that there is much that is shared, in both form

and experience, in the overlapping but distinct traditions of *bhakti*, and that revealing the worldview and ingredients of one tradition in

some depth provides a basic template that can readily be re tted and applied to other expressions, despite important di erences. If we analogize "Hinduism" as a universe containing numerous distinct

but also signi cantly overlapping and interacting galaxies, with

speci c devotional traditions analogous to constellations, then

awareness of the constitution and orbits of one constellation

provides invaluable information relevant to other constellations,

despite important di erences. There is thus merit in exploring one

bhakti universe with some profundity, rather than super cially attempting to cover the entire panoramic multifarious breadth of the vast spectrum of Hindu devotional traditions. Exposure to the metaphysical infrastructure, theological vision, set of practices, mental cultivations, and devotional depths of one tradition provides a useful blueprint that can be readily compared with others.

A further comment here on method: As is obvious from the cover

designs, this work was conceived as a follow-up to the author's

commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali. The rationale for that work, given the massive transplantation to the West of practices that

have been assigned the name *yoga*, was to attempt to provide some grounding of the actual metaphysics, goals, and practices of classical

yoga in their most prominent, premodern textual sources. This present project is motivated by similar intentions with regard to grounding *bhakti*. The di erence in this work is that owing to the variegation in the *bhakti* traditions, we have focused principally on one lineage-speci c expression of *bhakti*. The premodern Patañjali-derived Yoga tradition does not present the same heterogeneity as *bhakti*: there are no distinct lineages that derive from Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*,11 but rather an essentially fairly homogeneous commentarial Yoga tradition, all predicated on the rst commentary

on the text by Vyāsa, usually dated to around the third century. 12

Because of the canonical nature of Vyāsa, the later primary

commentators—such as Vācaspati Miśra, Śaṅkara, Bhoja Rāja,

Vijñānabhikṣu, and others—build on and expand on their

predecessors, they do not disagree on essential points. Any

di erences are relatively minor. 13 So we can speak of a fairly consistent "Yoga tradition" without overly generalizing or

essentializing (that is, sharing the same Sāṅkhya metaphysics,

understanding of mind and of consciousness, set of practices, and the like).

This is not the case with *bhakti*. Just to give a preview of a couple of topics that lie ahead to make this point, *bhakti* is both central to the Vedānta philosophical traditions and to the Purāṇa literary ones.

Ontology is the term used in philosophy to refer to the ultimate basic categories of reality (for example, in a typical monotheistic ontology: God, the world of matter, and souls), and there are

fundamental di erences among Vedānta lineages on essential

ontological categories. To name just one we will engage later, is *Īśvara*, God, who is the recipient of *bhakti yoga*, the Ultimate

Absolute Truth or a secondary one derived from some higher and even more Ultimate Truth? And there are di erences just as

signi cant in the Purāṇas, such as, for our purposes, whether Kṛṣṇa,

Viṣṇu, or Śiva is the ultimate source *Īśvara*, with the other divinities secondary or derivative manifestations from this source *Īśvara*. We will, of course, expound on all this in great detail within, but we touch on this now simply to note that it is because of such signi cant heterogeneity on basic issues pertaining to *bhakti* that we have chosen to enter deeply into one *bhakti* tradition, rather than go broad and super cially attempt to cover multiple traditions.

However, we will exemplify our featured tradition through

comparisons with others, and hence there will be frequent

references to predecessor and contemporary traditions of *bhakti*, especially those of *advaita Vedānta*, Śiva, and other Viṣṇu expressions.

This work is divided into ve parts. Part 1 sets out to provide an

analytic map of what constitutes the various principal ingredients of

bhakti. Here, we primarily follow Jīva Gosvāmī's systematic exposition on the *bhakti* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as expressed in his *Bhakti Sandarbha* (*Analysis of* Bhakti). We also signi cantly engage Rūpa Gosvāmī's works on *bhakti yoga*, speci cally the rst part of his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (*Ocean of the Nectar of the Experience of* Bhakti) and *Upadeśāmṛta* (*Nectar of Instruction*). We additionally draw from other *bhakti*-relevant texts, especially the *Bhagavad Gītā*

(here, too, following in Jīva's footsteps). Our major departure from

the textual corpus Jīva invokes is our own profuse referencing to Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*. This attention partly re ects this author's own work on the *Yoga Sūtras* (Bryant 2009), but it also allows us to compare and contrast aspects of generic meditative *yoga* (*dhyāna*)— the practice systematized for the rst time by Patañjali—with the path of *bhakti*. This is a contrast that surfaces repeatedly as a very important theme in the *Bhāgavata* as will be discovered, and hence

we feel justi ed in frequently referring to the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali (which would be useful but not essential preparatory

reading for the present work). This is especially so since, with modern *yogīs* in mind, the selections I have made from the *Bhāgavata* focus on Patañjali-like *yoga*, and I frequently draw attention to common concepts and phraseologies between the two sources.

Part 1 is divided into six sections. After these comments on the

methodology of the volume, this section, "Introduction to the

Volume," introduces the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* itself, as well as the commentators who will be our guides. The next section, "De nition

of *Bhakti*," provides a de nition of our subject matter. This is followed, in "The Practices of *Bhakti*," with an extensive discussion on *bhakti yoga* itself in its various forms of practices and devotional attitudes between devotee and God. "The Practitioner of *Bhakti*, the *Bhakta*" features the devotee,

agent, performer, and experiencer of *bhakti* (we note that *bhakti* is the practice and the *bhakta* is the practitioner, in distinction to *yoga*, which is the practice, and *yogī*, the practitioner). “The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies” discusses the various modes of understanding *Īśvara*, also referred to as *Bhagavān*, God, who is the object or recipient of *bhakti*. Finally, “Concluding Re ections” o ers a few of this author’s thoughts pertaining to the *Bhāgavata*’s uneasy placement in the modern, post-Enlightenment, intellectual world of our times. Here, we also summarize the Kṛṣṇa tradition’s overall soteriology (the nature of the ultimate liberated state) and locate this within the larger framework of some of the Hindu *mokṣa* (liberation) traditions.

The remaining four parts of the volume consist of translations.

Part 2 focuses on translations from the rst nine books of the *Bhāgavata*, featuring the great exemplars and *yogī* virtuosi of the text

—the *bhaktas*, the practitioners of *bhakti*, who have gained pan-

Indian status and whose lives and devotional practices serve as inspirational role models for the tradition. 14 The teachings of great *bhakta* sages or of various incarnations of *Īśvara* too are presented here; thus, some of the sections in part 2 are entitled “The Tale of…” and others “The Teachings of…” The *Bhāgavata*, as we will note below, contains a wide variety of subjects, but we will focus on the *yoga*- related components. Each section is introduced by a brief

“*yoga* blueprint,” identifying the main *yogic* or theological message and other such distinguishing features being imparted by the

narrative. In fact, the rst nine books of the text are designed to prepare the reader with the requisite metaphysical, psychological, and other such devotional requirements to encounter with the

appropriate attitude and understanding the summum bonum of the

work in the tenth book, *Śrī* Kṛṣṇa.

It is in part 3 that we feature the most popular narratives from

the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata*, pertaining to the object or recipient of *bhakti yoga* and ultimate goal of all its ingredients: Kṛṣṇa

Himself.15 We will see here that the foundation of this form of *bhakti yoga* is based on the *Bhāgavata*'s narratives of Kṛṣṇa's divine descent into this world as *avatāra*, breaking into human space and time and performing superwondrous deeds (as is the case with other manifestations of *Īśvara* in other *bhakti* traditions). Most especially, we will encounter here the notion of *līlā*, the blissful pastimes Kṛṣṇa inaugurates with His beloved *bhaktas* for their pleasure, which lies at the very heart of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*: love of God. Here, too, from the many *līlās* featured in book 10, we have extracted those that best highlight Kṛṣṇa's various types of relationships with His *bhaktas* and the corresponding *bhāvas* and *rasas*, emotional states of intense *bhakti*, as it is these that represent the ultimate goals of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* in the *Bhāgavata*.

In part 4, we present a translation of the *śiksāṣṭaka*, "The Eight Verses of Instruction," composed by Caitanya, teacher of Rūpa and

Jīva Gosvāmīs, and the fountainhead of the Gauḍīya tradition, which considers him to be an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. While Caitanya's

teachings were preserved and systematized by the *Gosvāmīs* and his life documented by later hagiographers in a number of works (from

which we have extracted here a few illustrations from the *Caitanya*

Caritāmṛta and *Caitanya Bhāgavata*), Caitanya himself penned only these eight verses. Finally, part 5 o ers a translation of the eighty-four *sūtras* of the *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*. This is a late text modeled on the *Yoga Sūtras* with the intention of providing a succinct exposition of *bhakti* utilizing the *sūtra* genre of expression. It seems aware of the theology that found its most elaborate expressions in the sixteenth-century writings of our *Gosvāmīs* (and their contemporary, Vallabha) and so ts harmoniously with the focus of our volume. It

is a useful manual for beginners.

With these preliminary comments pertaining to content and

method in place, then, we will devote only a few cursory words to

introducing the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, since we are limited in space

here,16 and a few more introducing Rūpa and Jīva and their tradition.

The *Bhāgavata* as Text17

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* forms part of a corpus of texts emerging from the late Vedic period known as the Purāṇas. The early Vedic

backdrop that spawned not just the *bhakti* of the *Bhāgavata*, but all Hindu forms of *yoga* and philosophies of *mokṣa* (liberation) cannot detain us here in detail (but see appendix 1 to get some sense of the

Vedic literary and cultural context from which, and against which,

the *Bhāgavata* is establishing its authority). 18 The word *purāṇa*, in Sanskrit, signi es "that which took place in the past"—namely,

ancient lore or legend. The Purāṇas are listed as eighteen in

number, 19 and it is in this genre of texts that, among many other topics, the stories of the various incarnations and activities of *Īśvara*,

God, and of His feminine counterpart, *Īśvarī*, the Goddess, when manifest on earth, are recorded. The Purāṇas also feature the

incredible acts of devotion, *bhakti*, toward these manifestations of *Īśvara* by superexemplary *bhaktas*. Thus, since *bhakti* is nothing other than devotion to a form of *Īśvara* or *Īśvarī*, the Purāṇa texts are the mainstay of *bhakti yoga*. The most immediately encountered aspects of Hinduism—the forms, personalities, qualities, deeds, and so on of Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, Śiva, the Goddess, and other divine *Īśvara* manifestations, depicted ubiquitously in the literature and the

numerous classical art forms of ancient India—are almost entirely extracted from the Purāṇas (and two epics) and their derivative literatures, as we will

see from our case study of the *Bhāgavata*. The Purāṇas as a genre, then, lie as the principal source of almost all forms of *bhakti yoga*. 20

In addition to these descriptions of the various *Īśvara* forms and their devotees, as well as the sectarian theologies and practices associated with them, these Purāṇas as we have them today are a

vast repository of stories about kings and royal dynasties; creation

accounts; traditional cosmologies; reworkings of ancient epic and Vedic narratives; *yogic* practices; popular religious beliefs concerning pilgrimages, holy places, and religious rites; information

of social and cultural relevance such as caste duties; and even prophetic statements about the future. Almost everything that has come to be associated with "Hinduism" has its roots in the Purāṇas.

The eighteen *mahā* (great) Purāṇas21 are said to contain four hundred thousand verses,22 and are the largest body of writing in Sanskrit.

There are two main transcendent deities in the Purāṇas, Śiva, and

Viṣṇu—three, if we include Brahmā, the secondary creator, 23 but as we will see, as a mortal-created being, 24 he is more of a placeholder and never a serious contender. While we will need to nuance this

later, Śiva in the overall Purāṇic narrative is usually associated with

the destruction of the universe at the end of each of its periodic cycles, and Viṣṇu, with its maintenance. A number of stories speak

of a playful rivalry between these two. A later Purāṇa, the *Devī*

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, marks the ascendancy into the Purāṇic genre of Devī, the Goddess, as the supreme matrix. As will be discussed in some detail within, the term "monotheism," when extracted from its

historical Abrahamic associations, can, if we wish to adopt it (given

our earlier comments about prioritizing Sanskritic terminologies), be

applied to certain expressions of the Purāṇic traditions, especially the various orthodox Vaiṣṇava traditions, but also certain Śaiva sects. 25 But this monotheism needs to be understood in the context of a Supreme Being, whether understood as Viṣṇu or Śiva, who can manifest as unlimited other transcendent *Īśvara* and *Īśvarī* Beings, who are thereby derivative from and thus secondary to the original

Godhead. This is not polytheism: perhaps we can think of this as a

"multiplicity in oneness" parallel of the Christian trinity.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, consisting of twelve *skandhas* (cantos, subdivisions, or books), occupies itself primarily with Viṣṇu and His

incarnations, featuring, most particularly, Kṛṣṇa. This focus is

structurally re ected in the fact that Kṛṣṇa is the exclusive subject

matter of the tenth book, which disproportionately constitutes about

one-quarter of the entire text. It is this tenth book that has caused

this Purāṇa to be recognized as the most famous work of Purāṇa literature by far. This tenth book, in my view, along with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is one of the two most in uential texts in Hinduism. This claim can be supported by the enormous amount of artistic and cultural traditions that its narratives have inspired over the last millennium in the form of derivate literature, poetry, drama,

iconography, art, and temple sculpture, in addition to a vast array of

intellectual and theological treatises from which the work of our *Gosvāmīs* is only one expression.26 The text's in uence can also be gauged by the overwhelming preponderance of traditional

commentaries it inspired compared with all the other Purāṇas put together: the *Bhāgavata* has generated eighty-one commentaries currently available in

Sanskrit alone, as well as others no longer extant (as a point of contrast, most of the Purāṇas have produced no traditional commentaries at all and others only one or, at most, with

the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, two). It has been translated into almost all the languages of India, with forty or so translations on record in Bengal

alone. 27 Tellingly, it has been neglected by Western scholarship until very recently. This is partly because the Victorian sensibilities of certain nineteenth-century Western Orientalists—and, just as

important, early Hindu spokespersons and apologists in uenced by

Western moral discourses—were outraged by the amorous liaisons

of Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhāgavata*, ignorant of their theological signi cances. 28 Consequently, the Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata* was jettisoned in favor of the more righteous Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

(henceforth *Gītā*)—a text that continues to produce hundreds of nonIndian translations—and still remains relatively unknown in the

West.

As an unambiguously Vaiṣṇavite text—that is, adhering to Viṣṇu

as the Supreme and Ultimate expression of Godhead (although the

Bhāgavata will renegotiate Kṛṣṇa's status here), the rst nine books of the *Bhāgavata* discuss in greater or lesser detail some of the major incarnations prior to Kṛṣṇa. These pave the way for the tenth book,

which comprises about four thousand out of a claimed eighteen

thousand total verses of the entire Purāṇa29 and is dedicated exclusively to Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, it is Kṛṣṇa, under His title of *Bhagavān* (de ned later), who gives His name to the whole *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

(literally, *Legend of* Bhagavān), as He does to the *Bhagavad Gītā*

(literally, “that which was recited by *Bhagavān*”). Within Vaiṣṇavism, then, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is the Kṛṣṇa-centered text par excellence, to the point that the Kṛṣṇaite theologies that

emerged in the sixteenth century30 use the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as

scriptural authority to claim that it is not Kṛṣṇa who is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, as He is depicted in the *Mahābhārata* epic and in the other Purāṇas, but rather Viṣṇu who is a partial incarnation

of Kṛṣṇa. In the theology of Jīva, Rūpa, and their associates, it is Kṛṣṇa who is the supreme Absolute Truth from whom all other

deities, including Viṣṇu, evolve. Thus, Kṛṣṇaism positions itself within the larger matrix of Vaiṣṇavism as a familiar but also distinct

expression.

It is an inconclusive task to try to assign speci c dates to the Purāṇas, as shown by the considerable variation in the dates

proposed by scholars for the *Bhāgavata* itself. Composed for public oral recitation, the Purāṇas are a maleable body of literature that continued to be transformed across the centuries by the uid

processes of transmission and adaptation to time and place as well

as sectarian partialities. Any datable piece of information that may

be gleaned from the texts may only re ect the historical period of

that portion of the text and not necessarily other sections. Moreover,

it is impossible to determine how long narratives had been in

existence in oral form prior to being committed to writing. Hence

Purāṇa scholars such as Rocher (1986) decline to attempt to date them. Accordingly, I will simply note here that the majority of scholars hold that

the bulk of the material in most of the eighteen

Purāṇas as we nd them today reached its full completion and nal

form by the Gupta period, from about the fourth to the sixth century

C.E., 31 even as many of these narratives had been evolving and handed down for many centuries prior to this.

There is no consensus regarding the date of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

itself in its nished form. While most specialists of the Purāṇas from

India have opted for a completion around the fourth century C.E.

during the Gupta period, some Western scholars have argued that it

is the latest of the eighteen Purāṇas, written (depending on the scholar) sometime between the ninth and the thirteenth century C.E.

in the south of the subcontinent. There are a number of signi cant reasons to question such a place of origin as well as time frame, which cause me to wonder whether the *Bhāgavata* too might not have reached its nal form by the Gupta period along with the other major Purāṇas.32 No matter: for our present purposes here, we will only reiterate that whatever date one assigns to the *Bhāgavata* applies only to the nal date of the entirety of the text as we now

have it, not to the material contained within it or even to portions

of the text itself. As with the Purāṇic genre in general, the upper—

limit date of the text is one issue, the date of the subject matter recorded in it is another.33 Be this as it may, there is no question that the story of Kṛṣṇa is far older than the owering of Purāṇic literature in the Gupta period. The earliest references to the Kṛṣṇa story, including sources outside the texts themselves, such as

archaeological ones, take us back to at least the fourth to the fth

century B.C.E.[34]

Needless to say, all such historical considerations of date and provenance are concerns for post-Enlightenment-derived, academic

(text-critical) scholarship. Tradition holds the Purāṇa texts to be divine revelations, the *Smṛti*, "that which is remembered," sacred Truths originating from an incarnation of *Īśvara* or empowered

sage.[35] Thus the *Bhāgavata* records various di erent branches of its own earlier stages of transmission[36] prior to its nal delivery by sage Śuka to King Parīkṣit that we will nd in part 2, including its primordial origins as imparted by Kṛṣṇa to Brahmā at the beginning of creation (II.9.43). Brahmā is deemed to have then imparted it to

sage Nārada, from whom it was transmitted to Vyāsa and then on to

Śuka.

Moving into this frame of reference expressed in the text itself, in

keeping with our own interests, the *Bhāgavata* introduces itself with the claim of being primarily a historical record of the events that transpired when "*Bhagavān*, Kṛṣṇa, performed superhuman activities

… concealed in the guise of a human" (I.1.20). In other words, it claims to be a record of events that transpired when God descended

on earth.

Although the *Bhāgavata* ostensibly presents itself as containing ten topics or subject matters, [37] Jīva points out that actually the real purpose of the text is in fact to provide the reader with the opportunity to encounter Kṛṣṇa, *Bhagavān*, the tenth and ultimate topic. This tenth subject matter is Kṛṣṇa, the *āśraya* (support) of the entire text. As far as the *Bhāgavata* is concerned, "the great souls (*mahātmās*) describe the characteristics of the rst nine topics, in order to clarify the tenth" (II.10.2). It is Kṛṣṇa who is the grand nale of all other subject matters. [38] The other nine topics—including the narratives of great kings—are simply to highlight some of *Īśvara*'s potencies

and qualities and provide some prerequisite context and preparatory devotional groundwork to enhance the

appreciation of the ultimate topic revealed in the tenth book, God

Himself: These stories of great kings, who spread their fame

throughout the worlds and then met their death, have been narrated

with the intention of expressing detachment from and insight into

[the temporal nature of material grandeur]. They are just a display

of rhetoric, they are not the Ultimate Truth. But, on the other hand,

the descriptions and qualities of Kṛṣṇa[39] which destroy all inauspiciousness, should always be recited. One desiring to attain pure *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa should always hear them without interruption.

(XII.3.14–15) Therefore the sages in the forest of Naimiṣa we will encounter in part 2 were interested in hearing about even the

saintly king Parīkṣit, Kṛṣṇa's grandnephew, only "if doing so is a basis for stories about Kṛṣṇa" (I.16.5–6).

The other nine topics—including the stories of the great *bhakta* exemplars and their teachings, which will be featured in part 2, as

well as accounts of the deeds of Viṣṇu's previous incarnations, along

with various related teachings—are covered in the *Bhāgavata*'s books 1–9 and 11–12. [40] The activities of Kṛṣṇa take up book 10, a quarter of the entire Purāṇa's bulk, and are represented in part 3 of

this volume. So these previous books are preparatory, providing the

necessary theological and metaphysical infrastructure to understand

the narrations of Kṛṣṇa, the apex of the entire text. Kṛṣṇa is the summum bonum, the other subject matters providing progressive

layers of context for his activities on earth, the *līlās*, Kṛṣṇa's playful pastimes with His beloved devotees.

These *līlā* narratives of this delightful appearance of God have captured the hearts, minds, and intellects of countless Hindus across

the centuries and underpin not only much of the aesthetics of

Hinduism, but also a good deal of its theologizing. Our concern here

is the intellectual textual traditions inspired by the *Bhāgavata*, but the cultural in uence of the text has been massive. Anyone who has

seen a performance of classical Indian dance, for example, has very

likely been treated to an enactment of some *līlā* episode from Kṛṣṇa's childhood, and there is every chance that if one happens upon a Hindu devotional poem or participates in an evening of

kīrtana (devotional singing), narratives from the text will be featured. Likewise, anyone encountering a collection of traditional Indian paintings will be struck by how many depict scenes from the

Bhāgavata, such as Kṛṣṇa with His beloved cowherd-women, the *gopīs*, and so forth with other art forms. 41 And, of course, anyone chancing upon a Hindu temple anywhere in India will stand a good

chance of encountering a deity of Kṛṣṇa, most typically (at least in

the north) with His beloved consort, Rādhā.

The Commentaries

In any event, turning to the scholastic literary tradition, among the

eighty-four or so Sanskrit commentaries written on the text's

eighteen hundred verses, one was by Jīva Gosvāmī. Jīva was one of

six *Gosvāmī* (renounced ascetic) theologians entrusted with intellectually systematizing the popular revival of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* emerging in the wake of the sixteenth-century charismatic Caitanya.

This phenomenon—sometimes considered a renaissance of *bhakti*—

took place primarily in East India as well as the Vṛndāvana area in

northwest India. Bengal, in East India, was where Caitanya was

born, and Vṛndāvana is where the *Bhāgavata* situates Kṛṣṇa's childhood millennia earlier.

Caitanya triggered a wave of Kṛṣṇa devotion across East India

featuring meditations on Kṛṣṇa's early-life *līlā* pastimes in the *Bhāgavata*'s tenth book and its derived literature. His movement especially expressed itself through the ecstatic public chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names (we will provide a few glimpses of Caitanya's hagiography in part 1). Caitanya also contributed to the revival of

the holy places associated with the *līlās* of the tenth book in Vṛndāvana (also referred to as Vraj herein), 42 which, as a result, developed into the bustling sacred town of today. Here Jīva resided

as one of the celebrated six *Gosvāmīs* who settled in this holy place.

These *Gosvāmīs* were essentially the intellectual founding gures of the tradition bestowed by Caitanya, producing an entire (and very

extensive) canon of literary, philosophical, and aesthetic works

dedicated to Kṛṣṇa. They were also responsible for the construction

of most of the main temples in the town built on sites sacred to Kṛṣṇa, making Vṛndāvana one of the most thriving pilgrimage places

in India today. 43 Thus a school was formed around Caitanya's life and teachings that came to be called the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava

tradition, or the Gauḍīya (Eastern) Vaiṣṇava tradition.

Although Caitanya personally recorded only eight verses in

writing (see part 4, "The Eight Versus of Instruction"), he inculcated

an elaborate theology of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* to some of His followers, especially Jīva's uncles Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī. 44 The distinguishing feature of these teachings from the perspective of the

greater landscape of the multifarious *bhakti* traditions of the time is their focus on the various types of ecstatic mental states and intimate relationships with Kṛṣṇa that can be cultivated and attained

through devotional practices, *bhakti yoga*. These teachings are, to all intents and purposes, a new body of divine revelation purporting to

disclose details of some of the most intimate and personal eternal activities of God. Nonetheless, great energy is invested by the *Gosvāmīs* in locating their roots within the larger body of Vedic and Vedic-derived sacred texts accepted by all Hindu schools, the *Śruti* and *Smṛti* (hence the tradition sees itself as a Vedānta tradition, all of which is discussed within and in appendix 1).

Among other things, Rūpa wrote the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (*Ocean of the Nectar of the Experience of* Bhakti) on these mental states (*bhāvas*) and relationships (*rasas*). In keeping with this imagery of the ocean, Rūpa divides his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* into four "quadrants": the Eastern (EQ), Western (WQ), Southern (SQ), and

Northern (NQ). These are further subdivided into a sequential

numbering of "waves" (for which we have just substituted the

numbers). We will be drawing mostly from the Eastern Quadrant

here. Rūpa also wrote a small handbook on *bhakti* practice, the *Upadeśāmṛta* (*Nectar of Instruction*), to which we will be referring.

But he primarily left it up to Jīva to systematize and articulate the

epistemology, metaphysics, and other philosophical ingredients of

the tradition and situate it in accordance with the expected criteria

of the intellectual milieu of the day. In addition to a considerable

body of other writings, including his commentary on the *Bhāgavata*

itself, Jīva compiled six treatises, the *Ṣat-Sandarbhas*, which subsequently took their place and remain at the core of the

philosophy and *bhakti* systematics of this school.45 These are essentially thematic analyses of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* from the perspective of the Gauḍīya tradition (that is, based on the

"revelations" of Caitanya), which was developing in Jīva's time. A

Sandarbha is de ned as a type of text "which illuminates an esoteric subject matter, expresses its essence as well as its excellence, gives

its various meanings, and is worthy of learning."46 In part 1 of this work, we will be drawing from the fth treatise, the *Bhakti Sandarbha*. 47

These six treatises encapsulate the entire philosophical basis—

metaphysical,

epistemological,

ontological,

ethical,

and

soteriological—of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, which considers itself a

Vedānta tradition. 48 The Sandarbhas are designed sequentially, prior volumes providing the epistemological and metaphysical

infrastructure precursory to the practice of *bhakti* outlined in the fth Sandarbha, which itself is precursory to the sixth, the *Prīti Sandarbha*, which deals with the goal of *bhakti*, love of God. So, in the *Bhakti Sandarbha*, Jīva is assuming the reader's familiarity with the previous four Sandarbhas and thus aware of the Gauḍīya position on certain essential issues central to the Vedānta as well as

Purāṇa traditions. So by joining Jīva in his fth Sandarbha, we are

leap-frogging over Jīva's own sequential logic. By this point in his

Sandarbhas, Jīva has already established why the *Bhāgavata* is to be deemed the paramount scripture on *bhakti* (discussed in appendix 1), and he assumes knowledge of the tradition's ontology (the

nature of manifest reality, the individual self within it, and the Absolute Cause from which it emerges), outlined in the rst four Sandarbhas. These are extensive domains in their own right, so we

can touch only brie y upon such topics when we need to identify

the main prerequisite metaphysical presuppositions fundamental to

the present study on *bhakti* (especially in the chapter "The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies"). But we must note that Jīva has argued and defended the tradition's

theological fundamentals extensively through scriptural exegesis

(interpretation) as well as through reason and argument. He has not

simply assumed them.

In terms of the subject matter of these six Sandarbhas, brie y, the rst, the *Tattva*, makes some preliminary comments on ontology and then focuses on epistemology (what constitutes a valid source of knowledge). 49 Since the exclusive focus on Kṛṣṇa as Godhead and *bhakti* as the summum bonum of human existence is based on the authority of the *Bhāgavata* tradition, Jīva must begin this rst Sandarbha with the epistemological issue of what makes the

Bhāgavata itself so authoritative. We have represented his arguments from the *Tattva Sandarbha* in appendix 1 so as not to overburden this introduction. The second Sandarbha, the *Bhagavat Sandarbha*, focuses on three transcendent aspects of the one Absolute Reality, with special attention directed toward the ultimate aspect of the personal *Bhagavān*, the Godhead (including monistic and monotheistic expressions). We will elaborate on this in some detail

in "The Object of *Bhakti*." The third, the *Paramātma Sandarbha*, features another of these three transcendent aspects: the various manifestations of God derived from Kṛṣṇa in the form of the

unlimited Viṣṇus immanent in or associated with the multiplicity of

universes in *prakṛti*, the material realm. The fourth, the *Kṛṣṇa Sandarbha*, focuses on the primacy of the form of Kṛṣṇa over other manifestations of *Bhagavān*, such as the multiple expressions of Viṣṇu, a topic also touched on in "The Object of *Bhakti*." Thus, the rst four Sandarbhas deal with the relationship between God and His energies, powers, and derivative manifestations. And the sixth,

the *Prīti Sandarbha*, occupies itself with the goal, love of God, free from all personal motives. (See Dāsa 2007 for a brief introduction

with sample translations from these Sandarbhas.) While we will be

drawing on occasion from these other Sandarbhas as noted, in part 1

we are joining Jīva for the fth, the *Bhakti Sandarbha*, which will outline the manifold ingredients and expressions of *bhakti yoga*. All the Sandarbhas are subdivided into *anucchedas*, thematic or topical sections (henceforth *anu*).

Our aim in this volume has been to open a modest window into the theological underpinnings and devotional practices of one

important *bhakti* tradition. We wish to stress once more that the same treatment can be directed to other *bhakti* traditions, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Devī (Goddess) centered, to which we make frequent

references. These all have their own powerful and coherent

theological appeal and unique devotional depths. The rich

variegation of these traditions reveals the multifarious theistic possibilities and richness of practice stemming from variants of *bhakti yoga* dedicated to the unlimited manifestations of

Īśvara/Bhagavān. We will consider our meager e ort in this regard successful if it inspires the reader to study the primary texts of these traditions directly in order to develop a deeper understanding of their tenets.

Despite our stated focus on attempting to present the tradition in

its own terms and frame of references, or perhaps because of it, we

would like to hope that this work will be of use to both academics

and scholars interested in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, as well as practitioners of some of the forms of *yoga*. From an academic perspective, in addition to gaining exposure to an entire devotional worldview and

mode of living in the world, by following the logic of the

organization and systematization of the textual material by our

Gosvāmīs, we encounter a good example of sectarian hermeneutics

(the methods of scriptural interpretation) committed to promoting a

comprehensive view of ultimate reality through a speci c *bhakti* lens. This hermeneutics includes the rationale through which certain

texts are prioritized and others minimized or ignored, and how, within commonly shared texts, sections or even individual

statements conducive to a lineage's sectarian ontologies and

hierarchies are prioritized and those less amenable in this regard ignored or assigned secondary meanings.

From the *yoga* practitioners' perspective, we are a orded a window into how a community of *bhaktas* with scholarly gifts and

inclinations undertake what they deem to be their service both to their beloved Kṛṣṇa and to humanity at large. For them, this entails

promoting, through the established intellectual criteria of their day

and age, the metaphysics, practices, goals, and experiences of not just *yoga*, but *bhakti yoga* (an important distinction that we will discuss in detail). Speci cally, in this tradition, the summum bonum

of human existence is to attain *bhakti rasa*, ecstatic love of a higher *ātman*, *Īśvara*, God. There is no other ultimate meaning or purpose to embodied life: "The rising and setting of the sun simply steals away the life of people other than those whose time is spent in devotion to Kṛṣṇa" (*Bhāgavata* II.3.17). Jīva and Rūpa, along with their contemporary *Gosvāmī* (ascetic) associates, dedicated their lives to revealing to others in a remarkably erudite and intellectually rigorous manner the expressions such devotion takes in its Kṛṣṇa modalities. We encourage those who wish to gain a closer sense of the appeal of *bhakti* as a profound and meaningful worldview and soteriological goal to associate with those dedicated to their practices both in the past, through the literatures they have

left behind, and in the present, through their teachings and

observing their lifestyles and behaviors. Readers interested in

pursuing this subject matter may care to study all the *Sandarbhas* and other *Gosvāmī* works systematically.50 But rst of all, of course, the reader is encouraged to read the entire *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in its own right. 51

Oṁ tat sat

PART I

Introduction to *Bhakti Yoga*

Elaborate on that which is called the *Bhāgavata*, such that *bhakti* for *Bhagavān*, Hari, will manifest among people.

—Brahmā to Sage Nārada, II.8.51–52

De nition of *Bhakti*

We begin with a de nition of *bhakti yoga*. But let us rst brie y note that the impulse for taking up *bhakti* in the rst place is the same as that for any aspiring *yogī* undertaking any path of *yoga*: harassed by the su ering and unful llment inherent in embodied existence in *saṁsāra*, the world of birth and death, one seeks to avoid future su ering. Thus, the opening verse of the fourth-century *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* makes awareness of su ering a prerequisite for seeking higher Truth: "It is because of the torment of the threefold su erings —from one's own body and mind, from other living entities, and from the environment—that the desire to know the means to

counteract them arises" (I.1). Adopting a form of *yoga* with serious intent as this entails coming to the realization not just that one is

su ering, but that all attempts at nding happiness through the

body/mind mechanism, when disconnected from knowledge of the

ātman (innermost self) or of *Īśvara*—the Supreme Being, God—

produces only temporal relief, and even this does not ful ll in any

ultimate sense. Hence *Sarvaṁ duḥkham* ("All is frustration") is a central maxim not only of Buddhism, where it is the rst

foundational Truth of the entire tradition, but of almost all the *yoga*

traditions.1 If one accepts (as did the ancient materialist voices related to Cārvāka2) that no doubt there is su ering, but there is also happiness to be sought and found in the pleasures of the world, then one will naturally channel one's energies into pursuing whatever it is that one perceives as being a source of that happiness.

In this case, one will not take to a *yoga* path with full dedication or, at least, will not do so in accordance with the presuppositions and

commitments of all the classical *yoga*, or *mokṣa* (liberation-seeking), traditions, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain.

Thus the rst dawning of insight, *viveka*, in Yoga (*Yoga Sūtras* II.15)3 is precisely that *all* is frustration, or at least unful lling, when one is under the in uence of *avidyā*, ignorance (of the true *ātman* self). Try as one may through the stimulation of the body, mind, and intellect, one cannot shake o a deep-rooted sense of existential malaise and lack of deep-level ful llment. When that Truth dawns irrevocably, one is ready to sincerely seek alternatives.

In *bhakti*, this entails taking refuge of *Īśvara*, God, and it is this devotional surrender to a Supreme Being that lies at the heart of *bhakti yoga*. 4 Rather than pursuing other options such as those of the generic *yoga* or *jñāna* (knowledge of *ātman*) traditions, then, the *yogī*

turns to *Īśvara*, but the motive is the same: one has failed to counteract su ering by other known material means.5

However, while the practices of *bhakti* are initially performed out of a desire to avoid su ering, *vaidhī bhakti*, they eventually develop into unmotivated, spontaneous, and ecstatic love for God, *rāgānugā*

bhakti, as we will see. And it is because of this ultimate result that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* follows the *Gītā* in unambiguously asserting that *bhakti* is superior to other *yogas* (for instance, see *Gītā* VI.46–47, XII.2, and throughout). This is both because it is an easier path and more joyfully performed (*Gītā* IX.2) and because it reveals a higher Truth than that revealed by other *yoga* paths. Through other forms of *yoga* one can attain

awareness of the *ātman*, the innermost self (the pure consciousness that is the goal of Patañjali in the chapter "The Practitioner of *Bhakti*, the *Bhakta*"), but through *bhakti*, in addition to the *ātman*, one can attain awareness culminating in

ecstatic love of *Parama-ātman, Īśvara*, the Supreme *Ātman* beyond the individual *ātman*. In the Vaiṣṇava reading of the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Īśvara*, also known as *Bhagavān*, is a Truth beyond that of the *ātman*.6 And the Ultimate *Īśvara* is Kṛṣṇa. We will return to all this in considerable detail later in "The Object of Bhakti," but for now we can consider *bhakti yoga* as the speci c means and practices through which one takes shelter of *Īśvara*, initially—at least for most practitioners—out of material desperation, but

eventually out of unrestrainable, intoxicating love.

With regard to a formal de nition of *bhakti*, there were, naturally, a variety of overlapping de nitions in circulation in textual sources, highlighting its various ingredients and di erent emphasis given by di erent sages. The *Bhakti Sūtras* of Nārada (16– 19) expresses a few: "*Bhakti* includes attachment to *pūjā* (ritual worship of *Īśvara*), according to sage Vyāsa; love of *kathā* (stories about *Īśvara*'s incarnations) and such things, according to sage Garga; and the o ering of all acts to *Īśvara* and the experiencing of extreme distress upon forgetting Him, according to sage Nārada."

(We use the gendered pronouns "He" and "Him" and the like, as *Īśvara* is a masculine entity; *Īśvarī* is the feminine form, and were this analysis focused on Durgā, Lakṣmī, Rādhā, or Kālī, as opposed

to Kṛṣṇa, we would use feminine pronoun forms.)7 The *Sauṇḍilya Sūtra* states that "*bhakti* is supreme devotion (*anurakti*) for *Īśvara*"

(I.2).

As discussed in the introduction, Rūpa Gosvāmī and his nephew

Jīva Gosvāmī will be our primary guides in our analysis of *bhakti* throughout this part, so we will focus on the de nitions they select.

In his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, Rūpa o ers the following de nition:

"*Bhakti* is said to be service to Kṛṣṇa,8 by means of the senses. This service is free of all limitations, dedicated to Him and pure [of self-

motive]."9 Jīva opts for a similar de nition: "The root *bhaj* means to o er service. 10 Therefore the wise have described *bhakti*, which is

the preeminent path of attaining perfection, as service." 11 Thus, putting all these together, *bhakti* is theistic and encompasses such activities as worship; the o ering of one's acts to *Īśvara*; reading the stories of His divine incarnations; constant remembrance of Him; and, for Rūpa and Jīva most especially, using oneself in the service of Kṛṣṇa, the ultimate expression of *Īśvara*. We might brie y note here that service is synonymous with love. True love, one can

suggest, is nothing other than the experience of complete

satisfaction attained from fully dedicating oneself to pleasing one's

beloved through acts of devotion and service. And, of course, for love to be true, this devotion and service must be fully reciprocal.

We will see in part 3 the unbounded degree to which Kṛṣṇa, despite

being supremely independent as the Ultimate Absolute Being,

returns the love of His devotees by submitting to them according to

their desire.

Bhakti, then, is love of God free of all self-interest. Indeed, Rūpa nuances loving service by de ning the "highest type" of devotion (*uttama bhakti*), as "continued service to Kṛṣṇa, which is

[performed] pleasingly,12 is unobstructed by the desire for liberation or enjoying the fruits of one's work in the world, and is free of any

other desire.” 13 In the words of the *Bhāgavata*: The characteristics of *bhakti yoga*, which is free of the *guṇas*, has been described as that *bhakti* to the Supreme Person which is free of motive, and uninterrupted. Such persons [who engage in this] do not accept the ve types of liberation14 … even if these are o ered, if they are devoid of service to God. (III.29.12–14) These ve types of Vaiṣṇava

postmortem liberation will occupy us later, but it is important to note that the very notion of liberation itself, the generic goal of all

yoga systems, is rejected in the higher stages of *bhakti*, a theme that we will return to frequently. In fact, disinterest in liberation is one

of six qualities accompanying *bhakti* identi ed by Rūpa in another of his works15 partly because it is still in the realms of self-interest,

but also because the bliss *bhakti* bestows far surpasses the bliss of the *ātman*’s immersion in its own nature of pure consciousness, the culmination of the generic path of *yoga*.

The common denominator underpinning all of these de nitions of

bhakti yoga is that they feature the *bhakta*—a type of *yogī* who practices *bhakti*—and *Īśvara*, God, a Supreme Being who is the object of *bhakti*. Thus *bhakti* as a *yoga* process requires at least two entities: the *bhakta* and *Īśvara*. In the next section of part 1 we will turn to the practices of *bhakti yoga* itself, following very closely in the footsteps of our guides, Jīva and Rūpa; in “The Practitioner of *Bhakti*, the *Bhakta*,” we will consider some of the characteristics of the *bhakta* as a *yogī*; and in “The Object of *Bhakti*,” we will engage some of the ways *Īśvara*, or the term’s near synonym *Bhagavān*, has been construed in important *bhakti* traditions of India. We will use the terms *Īśvara* and *Bhagavān* synonymously for now (but will provide some nuance between them in “The Object of *Bhakti*”) and note that in the *Bhāgavata*, Kṛṣṇa is presented as the most complete and perfect expression of these terms, the source of all the other unlimited manifestations of *Īśvara*/*Bhagavān*.

Then, in parts 2 and 3, we exemplify these three aspects of *bhakti*

yoga through translations from the *Bhāgavata* itself as source text.

We have noted that it is the stories of Kṛṣṇa as *Īśvara*/ *Bhagavān* when He incarnated into the world that have most especially

delighted and enchanted *bhaktas* from all Hindu devotional traditions across the ages and that have made the *Bhāgavata* the most devotionally in uential text in Hinduism along with the

Rāmāyaṇa. The innermost core of *bhakti yoga* in the Kṛṣṇa tradition is nothing other than the expression of this enchantment.

The Practices of *Bhakti*

Vaidhī (Prescriptive) *Bhakti* and *Rāgānugā* (Spontaneous) *Bhakti*

In the *Bhakti Sandarbha,* Jīva structures his analysis of *bhakti yoga* around a twofold categorization: *vaidhī bhakti* and *rāgānugā bhakti*.

Vaidhī bhakti is devotion prompted by rules and prescriptions (*vidhi*)

—the injunctions of scripture. In other words, it consists of

regulated practices established by tradition—which typically means

texts associated with *Īśvara* (for instance, see *Gītā* IV.7–8) or with accomplished predecessor *bhaktas* who attained success in the past and are therefore devotional exemplars and authorities such as our

Gosvāmīs. *Rāgānugā bhakti* manifests in the case of very rare souls in the form of devotion that has no need for following prescribed or

formalized methods but rather results spontaneously from natural

innate attraction (*rāga*) for *Īśvara*. In Rūpa's words, *vaidhī* "is born from the prescriptions of the sacred texts, rather than emerging from the development of desire for God," as is the case with

rāgānugā (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant1 2.6). *Vaidhī* is the method adopted by the vast majority of practitioners who strive to

cultivate *bhakti*, while *rāgānugā* stems from inherent attraction unmediated by regulations—at least in this life (in fact, *rāgānugā*

usually stems from perfected past-life *vaidhī* practice but can in rare cases be attained by grace).

However, we should immediately note for those familiar with *yoga* concepts that the type of *rāga* in *rāgānugā* (literally, "following"

anugā, *rāga*) re ects the highest type of *yogic* attainment in this system, since it is focused exclusively on *Īśvara*, as will be discussed in detail later, and is not to be confused with mundane desire—the

rāga of Patañjali, for example, which, stemming from ignorance, is focused on the body and mind and is an obstacle to *yoga* (a *kleśa* per *Yoga Sūtras* II.4–7). We will rst consider *vaidhī bhakti*, which will introduce us to the nine standard practices typically associated with the term *bhakti yoga* and thus with the central theme of this book, and then *rāgānugā*.

The Nine Practices of *Vaidhī Bhakti*

The *Bhāgavata* distills the actual practices of *bhakti* into nine basic activities that constitute the standard classical Vaiṣṇava list of primary *bhakti yoga* processes: The nine characteristics of *bhakti* that people can o er to Viṣṇu2 are: hearing about Him, singing about Him, remembering Him, serving His feet, worshipping Him, glorifying Him, considering oneself His servant, considering oneself

His friend, and surrendering completely to Him. (VII.5.23) Thus, just as the practices for generic or classical *yoga* as articulated in the *Yoga Sūtras* are schematized by Patañjali as consisting of eight limbs, the *aṣṭāṅga* (II.29 .), even as there were multiple variants and alternative models;3 and just as some of the Vedānta traditions divide *jñāna yoga*, the path of knowledge, into three (or four) primary activities;4 so the classical practices of *bhakti yoga* are formalized as comprising these nine, even as this list is certainly not exhaustive or exclusive as we will see. We will discuss these

processes one by one.

Śravaṇa (Hearing)

The rst actual activity or process of *bhakti*, *śravaṇa*, hearing about *Īśvara*, God, is the starting point from which the other eight processes of *bhakti* develop.5 Obviously any sort of spiritual practice can begin only when one initially hears or learns something about it. In Jīva's de nition: "When the organs of hearing contact the words describing the name, form, qualities, and pastimes [of

Bhagavān], the term *śravaṇa* is assigned" (*anu* 248). In the time of the *Bhāgavata*, and still in Jīva's time, most people would have received the text orally, since primarily only some members of the

brāhmaṇa caste were literate, and so the text would typically have been recited by one of them from memory or from a hand-copied

manuscript. With the widespread nature of literacy and print media

in our day and age, we of course have the facility to read the accounts. Either way, both hearing and reading relate to absorbing

the mind in God manifest as sacred Word, and this is the essence of

śravaṇa.

In fact, the entire *Bhāgavata* sees its own raison d'être as sacred text as being nothing other than the recording and preserving of narratives about *Īśvara* such that they can be formally heard (XII.13.18). These stories, called *līlās*, are deemed so delightful and enchanting that they naturally capture the mind. Just as in conventional love a airs, a person becomes enamored with the

form, qualities, and activities of a beloved and, when love is in full

bloom, can think of nothing else, so, in *bhakti*, the mind is captivated by *Īśvara* as encountered in the amazing stories contained in texts such as the *Bhāgavata*. When this initial attraction is channeled through the nine

practices, devotion and love of God can develop. The *Bhāgavata* is nothing other than concentrated *śravaṇa*, composed so that the seeds of *bhakti yoga* can be planted in the minds of those seeking a relationship with *Īśvara*.

Once the mind becomes attracted to the stories of Kṛṣṇa through

śravaṇa and, in time, captivated by love for Him, it loses its

attachments to this world, which pale in comparison. This too happens naturally. The mind consequently shakes o the grip of

mundane desire, which is the fuel perpetuating the cycle of birth and death in all *yoga* traditions. One thereby becomes eligible for liberation from this cycle, *saṁsāra*. *Bhakti*, from the perspective of being a *yoga* process, is nothing other than this. Of course, as we will nd out, liberation is not in fact sought by true *bhaktas*, who wish to be immersed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa rather than in the *ātman*, a state of consciousness devoid of all objects, as per the goal of generic *yoga*. We are repeatedly reminded that, from *śravaṇa*, hearing about Kṛṣṇa, one's mind becomes so enchanted that, to say nothing of interest in material (*prakṛtic*) things, it loses all interest it might have had in conventional *ātman* liberation. 6 This is because conventional liberation deprives the *bhakta* from hearing about the beloved *Īśvara*: "I will never desire even liberation, O Lord, because in that state there is no nectar about your lotus feet, which ows out of the depths of the hearts and through the mouths of the great souls. Please grant me this boon: let me have 10,000 ears [to hear

about You]" (IV.20.24). The *Bhāgavata* cannot comprehend anyone

not becoming enchanted by Kṛṣṇa: "Who, absorbed in hearing the

narrations of Hari, could possibly not develop attraction for them?"

(II.3.12).

We will illustrate aspects of the nine processes of *bhakti* with anecdotes from the hagiography of Rūpa's teacher, Caitanya

Mahāprabhu, beginning here with a passage pertaining to the e ects

that can be wrought on the listener by the practice of *śravaṇa* about Kṛṣṇa:
Then [Caitanya] visited another gentleman's house.…

Ratnagarbha Ācārya was a great devotee of the Lord, and was very

fond of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He was at that time reading from the *Bhāgavatam* with great respect and a ection.… [He read a passage from book X, where the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* meet Lord

Kṛṣṇa].… Spoken with great devotion, these words of the *Śrīmad*

Bhāgavatam entered the ears of Lord Viśvambhara [Caitanya]. As soon as he heard these words … [Caitanya] … fell down

unconscious overcome with spiritual ecstasy. All the students were

amazed at the sight. After remaining in trance for a while, the Lord

regained his external consciousness. When he was able to speak, the

Lord said to Ratnagarbha Ācārya: "Go on, Go on." He rolled on the

ground in ecstasy. The Lord continued to urge him on, saying, "Go

on! Go on!" The *brāhmaṇa* continued to read, and everyone oated

on the nectarine ocean of love of Kṛṣṇa. Unrestrained tears from the

Lord's eyes ooded the entire world. All the ecstatic symptoms like

shivering, horripilation, and crying manifested in the Lord's person."

(*Caitanya Bhāgavata*, *Madhya-khaṇḍa*, I.300–10)7

Since Kṛṣṇa is the source of all bliss, when His presence contained in

the *līlās*, stories, enters through the ears by means of *śravaṇa*, the body experiences bliss, and its normal functioning can be disrupted.

Indeed, the body can erupt into physiologically aberrant symptoms,

such as emiting tears or displaying hair standing on end, owing to

contact with this transcendent presence. We will encounter such

e ects ensuing from the other *bhakti* practices as well. This is the ecstasy of devotion.

Thus, the entire *Bhāgavata* is composed to provide an opportunity for *śravaṇa* and, through that, a vivid and transformational encounter with *Īśvara*, which culminates in falling in love with God: For the righteous, who are free of envy, the highest *dharma* is to be found in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, in which all dishonesty (worldly *dharmas*) has been rejected.8 Composed by the great sage Vyāsa, only the Ultimate Truth is revealed here, which bestows auspiciousness, and uproots the threefold miseries of life. 9 Can *Īśvara* be immediately captured in the heart by anything else? In this text, He is captured in an instant by the virtuous who desire to hear.

It is the succulent ripened fruit of the desire tree10 of the Vedic

scriptures.…11 *Aho!* 12 O connoisseurs of divine ecstasy, 13 while in this world drink continuously the spiritual avors (*rasa*) of the *Bhāgavata*—love of God—to your full satisfaction. (I.1.2–3) Indeed, as we will see in his tale, prior to his composition of the *Bhāgavata*, the despondency of the great sage Vyāsa—whom tradition ascribes to be the divider of the one Veda into four, the compiler of the one

Purāṇa into eighteen Purāṇas totaling four hundred thousand

verses, the recorder of the immense one-hundred-thousand-verse

Mahābhārata epic (and even the primary commentator on the *Yoga Sūtras*) —was precisely because, despite this proli cacy, he had not adequately described the *līlā* narrations of *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa in all this massive output of knowledge. His heart was thus dry from lack of *rasa*, devotional ecstasy. From the perspective of *bhakti*, all these other texts deal with mundane subject matters or, at best, in the case of the *mokṣa* (liberation) traditions of generic *yoga*, spiritually incomplete topics: Sir, for the most part, you have not described the spotless fame of *Bhagavān*. 14 I consider any knowledge, which does not satisfy the Lord, to be barren. You have not described the

greatness of Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa), to the same extent that you have glori ed the four mundane goals of life— *dharma*, civic duty; *artha*, material prosperity; *kāma*, ful llment of desires; and *mokṣa*, liberation of the *ātman*. 15 Those who dwell in the lovely abode of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* do not nd attractive those words, even if replete with literary embellishments, that do not describe the glory of Hari [Kṛṣṇa], which purify the world—just as the swans from the

celestial Mānasa lake do not dwell in the ponds frequented by

crows. (I.5.8–11)16

Thus, the entire *Bhāgavata*, and especially its tenth book, is nothing other than *śravaṇa* about Kṛṣṇa, the summum bonum of existence. And *bhakti yoga* is nothing other than the mind becoming attracted to the *līlās*, pastimes, through *śravaṇa*, and then subsequently engaging itself in the remaining eight processes of *bhakti* such that this blissful encounter with Kṛṣṇa can be cultivated into an active relationship and ceaselessly deepened.

Before proceeding to the remaining practices of *bhakti*, Jīva presents a sequence of focus pertaining to *śravaṇa*, hearing about Kṛṣṇa, which also applies to the next two processes of *bhakti*. He notes that the ideal progression in the order of aural topics is, optimally, rst to hear about Kṛṣṇa's names, then to hear about His forms, then His qualities, and nally His *līlās*, pastimes, in that order (*anu* 256). While hearing about any of these and in any order can lead to perfection, he states that generally the process starts with hearing the names of Kṛṣṇa. This cleanses the mind, allowing it su cient purity to begin to comprehend the second item of focus, Kṛṣṇa's form: "Entering through the ears, that form becomes

imprinted on the minds of the saints and never escapes" (XI.30.3).

Once the form manifests in the mind, then, in turn, one can better

hear about the qualities associated with Kṛṣṇa's form. Each step of

this process puri es the mind further, until nally Kṛṣṇa's *līlās*, pastimes, which of course feature and highlight His form and

qualities, can be experienced, as we will discover in part 3.

Kīrtana (Chanting)

Kīrtana refers to singing, chanting, or reciting the names and deeds of *Īśvara*. As with all the nine processes, "*bhakti* for *Bhagavān* will arise in one who sings, hears about, and rejoices in Him" (X.69.45).

Although *śravaṇa* is the primary and foundational practice of *bhakti*, it is, in a sense, a passive activity. *Kīrtana* is the preeminent active spiritual practice promoted by the *Bhāgavata*,[17] and is the most accessible process for attaining immediate personal contact with *Īśvara* for most practitioners.

This is so because sacred names are considered identical to *Iśvara*:

"the Lord … takes the form of mantras" (I.5.38). *Mantras* are divine

presence, not symbols or names representing something beyond themselves as with normal language. They embody actual

immediate Divinity. Conventional names and words, such as "book"

or "pot," are representational sounds, established by social

consensus for the purpose of communication. And they di er from

one language group to another: the English word "book" is *pustaka*

in Sanskrit, *libro* in Italian, *kitab* in Hindi/Urdu, and so on (and one could just as well invent a new word for book, such as "umma-gumma," if one could convince other people in one's social sphere

to start adopting it). So conventional words are di erent from the

actual objects to which they refer;[18] one's thirst cannot be quenched by saying "water," since the word "water" is di erent from the substance water, nor will the contents of this book be internalized

simply by repeating its title. The name of Kṛṣṇa, in contrast, *is* Kṛṣṇa personally and immediately present in sonic form. Therefore, God can be directly experienced by reciting His name: The Name [of Kṛṣṇa] is absolute

and it is pure, because there is no di erence between the Name, and that which it denotes. The Name *is* Kṛṣṇa Himself in His form of pure consciousness. 19 It is eternally liberated.

It is a wish-granting gem. 20 The Name, etc., 21 of *Śrī* Kṛṣṇa cannot be grasped by the material senses: Kṛṣṇa Himself manifests [by His own

accord] on the tip of the tongue, which has been applied to service

[in the form of chanting]. (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.233–34) That Kṛṣṇa can actually personally appear in the form of

the Name (sometimes written with a capital "N" to stress its

nondi erence from the person God) is just a sonic parallel of the claims, discussed later, that He can also appear before the eyes in a

perceivable form. 22 As a vision of Kṛṣṇa is visual divine presence, the sound "Kṛṣṇa" is sonal divine presence. In both cases, this presence is perceived or not perceived in proportion to the purity and devotion of the *bhakta* or not. Hence, since Kṛṣṇa fully manifests His personal presence for advanced practitioners, such *bhaktas* can exhibit extreme ecstatic states in *kīrtana*. This is because whenever the psychophysical mechanism contacts Kṛṣṇa manifest in any form

such as sound, the ecstasy the mind and body experience from this

direct encounter causes them to erupt into abnormal physical

symptoms. Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of ultimate bliss, and extreme

bliss can wreak havoc on the conventional functioning of the

body/mind mechanisms. These bodily reactions can sometimes be

quite startling to conventional perception. Consider the dramatic ecstatic symptoms produced by *kīrtana* that were exhibited frequently by *Śri* Caitanya Mahāprabhu (Prabhu, below):

Mahāprabhu danced … deeply absorbed and the people all around

him were wet with the tears of *prema* [divine love] of Prabhu.

Prabhu raised his arms and said, *"Bol! Bol!"* ["Chant! Chant!"] and the people oating in *ānanda* [bliss] raised the sound of Hari. Now he fell in a faint, and he had no more breath; and suddenly he stood

up again and shouted. He was like a *śimūlī* tree, thick with goose esh: sometimes his body blossomed [with it], and sometimes

it abated. Blood sweat came out of every pore of his body, and he

stuttered.… It seemed that each of his teeth were separately

trembling; his teeth chattered so, it seemed that they would fall out

on the ground. As time went on Prabhu became increasingly

absorbed in *ānanda*. The third watch came, and still the dancing was not ended. A sea of *ānanda* welled up in all the people, and everyone forgot their bodies, their selves, and their homes.

(*Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya-līlā* 10.66–73)23

I sometimes analogize such states as comparable to an electric

appliance designed for one voltage system, blowing its mechanisms

when contacting a much higher voltage system.

Mantra, then, sometimes called *nāma-avatāra*, sonic incarnation, is "infused with speci c power, either by the Lord or great sages, and establishes a unique relationship with the Lord," says Jīva (*anu*

284). In the words of the *Bhāgavata*, "The Lord of worship is without material form, but He takes the form of *mantras*. By worshipping Him by means of the forms of these names, a person

becomes a sage and his or her perception becomes perfect” (I.5.37–

38). As re permeates an iron bar, which becomes “ re-ized” and

nondi erent from re because of such permeation, so *Īśvara*

manifests within *prakṛti* in various forms, one of which is sound, such that it becomes *Īśvara*-ized, so to speak. And, as wherever there is re there are the qualities of heat and light, so wherever *Īśvara* is present, there is, in addition to ecstasy, purity as well. Hence, in addition to its bliss-bestowing potential, *kīrtana* is especially e ective in removing impure in uences from the mind (the *kleśas*):24

A sinful person is not puri ed by the acts of atonement and

vows prescribed by the experts in Vedic knowledge as much as

by the reciting of the syllables of the name of Hari.… For even

when atonement is performed, it is not really accomplished if

thereafter the mind once again runs along the path of

unrighteousness. For one who desires to eliminate all *karma*, the repetition of the names and qualities of Hari truly makes

the mind pure (*sāttvika*) [and hence one loses the desire to perform further unrighteous acts]. (VI.2.11–12) Other

puri catory processes may eliminate the negative *karmic*

consequences of unrighteous action, but they do not eradicate

the initial impulses or desires, called *saṁskāras* in Yoga psychology, that prompted such behavior in the rst place.

Hence, those *saṁskāras* (not to be confused with *saṁsāra*25) can activate again. This is sometimes compared with an elephant

taking a bath in the river only to emerge from the water and

then roll in the sand again. *Kīrtana* eradicates the *saṁskāras* themselves, not just their *karmic* consequences, and hence is considered the supreme puri er.

The reason for this is that since *Īśvara* is nondi erent from the name, it is *Īśvara* who actually manifests personally within the mind of the sincere chanter, and where *Īśvara* is present, there can be no impurity: "*Bhagavān* quickly enters the heart of one who faithfully hears and constantly recites His activities. Entering through the portals of the ears, Kṛṣṇa puri es all impurities from the lotuslike heart of His devotees, like Autumn does to the waters" (II.8.4–5).

Consequently: "A thief; a drunkard; a murderer of friends; a killer of

brāhmaṇas; one who de les his *guru*'s bed; a murderer of a woman, king, parent, or cow; all these and other types of sinners—indeed for

every kind of evil person—the chanting of the name is the best atonement; the mind of Viṣṇu [is attracted] by that sound" (VI.2.10–

11).Of course, since *kīrtana* is initially a *vaidhī* practice, and thus typically initiated by self-centeredness (albeit of the right sort) rather than pure love of God, it may take some time for these impurities to clear such that the consequent natural sweetness of the name can manifest, and ecstasy be experienced, as Rūpa notes:

"Even though the name, activities and so forth of Kṛṣṇa may be sweet, they may not be relishable to a tongue which is a icted by

the bile of ignorance. Nonetheless, if chanted every day diligently, it

destroys the poison at its roots, and its nectar slowly becomes pleasurable" (*Upadeśāmṛta*, 7). But once the heart (the seat of the mind) has been cleansed through *kīrtana,* and *Bhagavān* has begun to reveal His presence, the ecstatic e ects of *kīrtana* can be quickly felt: "When one's love is awakened and one's heart has melted while chanting loudly the names of one's beloved Lord, one laughs, one weeps, one cries out, one sings and one dances like a madman, completely indi erent to social norms" (XI.2.40). Thus *kīrtana*

embodies both *yoga* as method—clearing all impurities (*kleśas*)—and *yoga* as goal—ecstatic love of God.

In fact, the *Bhāgavata*, along with other Purāṇas, 26 considers *kīrtana* to be the *yuga dharma*, the recommended spiritual practice for *Kali yuga*, the present and most degraded of the four ages (*yugas*):27

Although the age of *Kali* is a breeding ground of faults, O king, it does have one great quality: merely by performing Kṛṣṇa

kīrtana, one is freed from attachments and attains the supreme.

The goal that was obtained in the *yuga* of *Satya* by meditation (*dhyāna*), in the *yuga* of *Tretā* by worshipping through ritualistic sacri ces (*yajña*), in the *yuga* of *Dvāpara* by deity worship (*paricaryā*), is attained in the *yuga* of *Kali* by *kīrtana*.

(XII.3.52)28

Consequently: "The noble Āryans,29 who are connoisseurs of quality and extract the essence of things, extol the age of *Kali*, because in that age, all desired objects are obtained merely by *saṅkīrtana*" 30

(XI.5.36).

The practice of *japa* is also situated under the rubric of *kīrtana*.

Where *kīrtana* is a public congregational practice, *japa* is the personal, private, and meditative recitation of *mantra*. The verb *jap* means to repeat something softly. The term has its origins in the Vedic period31 and, by the Upaniṣads, the earliest mystico-philosophical texts in the Vedic corpus, becomes associated with the repetition of *oṁ*. *Oṁ* in these texts is identi ed with *Brahman* 32—

Brahman is the name given to the Absolute Truth in the Upaniṣads—

and both *oṁ* and *Brahman* in turn become identi ed with *Īśvara*, the personal feature of *Brahman*. 33 (The various ways *Brahman* is construed in the main schools derived from the Upaniṣads, and exactly how it correlates with the

term *Īśvara* is a topic that will occupy our attention in "The Object of *Bhakti*.") As *bhakti* practices superseded the old Vedic rituals, the term *japa* increasingly referred to the soft (or silent) repetition of *Īśvara*'s name—that is, the absorption of the mind in the Deity's sonic *mantra* form, or sound presence. Thus, Kṛṣṇa states in the *Gītā* that He is *oṁ*,[34] and of all ritual o erings, He is *japa* (X.25). Likewise, in the *Yoga Sūtras*, *Īśvara* is presented as the most important object upon which to x the mind in order to still it, and one does this through performing *japa* on *oṁ*, His signi er, "keeping its meaning in mind" (I.28; we will consider a *bhakti* reading of this phrase below). In the more developed theisms of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, *oṁ* is retained but expands into the more personal *mantras* associated with *Īśvara* as Śiva and Viṣṇu. The two *mantras* explicitly expressed in the *Bhāgavata* are *oṁ namo Nārāyaṇāya*, the *mantra* for Viṣṇu (VIII.3.32), and *oṁ namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*, that for Kṛṣṇa (I.5.37, IV.8.54, VIII.16.39). The corresponding *mantra* in Śaivism is *oṁ namo Śivāya*. In Jīva's Gauḍīya tradition, *japa* becomes the primary practice of personal meditation, and Caitanya popularized the chanting of the by now well-known Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* (great *mantra*): *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare*; *Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*.

Mantra japa is optimally performed rst thing in the morning—

ideally an hour or so before the sun rises. This is called the *brāhma-muhūrta* (*Brahman* time).[35] At this time, the mind is rested and no longer in a state of lethargy (*tamas*), and the activity of the day has yet to commence with the awakening of living creatures and life's duties along with the rising sun (*rajas*). This *brāhma-muhūrta* is the optimal time for *yogīs* serious about meditation, as it is the period most favorable for concentration, detachment, and calmness.

In *japa* meditation, all the generic rules of classical Patañjali-type meditation apply: the mind is to be xed without deviation on the

mantra (*Yoga Sūtras* I.28 and 32), and this practice requires prolonged regular e ort (I.12–13). However, this is ideally

performed in a mind imbued with love for *Īśvara*, *bhāva*, discussed below, rather than just mechanically.[36] Additionally, the *japa* is

uttered in a mood of total dependency on *Īśvara*'s grace as opposed to one's own willpower and *yogic* virtuosity. In advanced stages, the *bhakta*'s mind is naturally permeated with love and surrender to the beloved *Īśvara*. However, these attitudes of love and surrender while performing *japa* are avors of the meditating mind, they must not agitate it into active thought. The rules of meditation remain the same—the mind must strive to remain xed without deviation on the repetition of the *japa*: "From wherever the mind wanders, due to its ckle and unsteady nature, one must control it and bring it back

under the control of the higher self" (*Gītā* VI.26). So *japa* is not prayer. Of course prayer is most de nitely a *bhakti* activity—in fact, Jīva places under this category of *kīrtana* reciting prayers to *Īśvara*, along with expressing feelings of humility and revealing one's desires to Him (*anu* 276). But prayer is conventionally a practice that involves an active mind; *japa* is a practice of *citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*, the complete stilling of all the thoughts of the mind upon the *mantra* (*Yoga Sūtras* I.2, applied to I.27–28).

In Jīva's tradition, the *nāma-ācārya*, or exemplar of *japa*, is Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Perhaps the most famous Gauḍīya story featuring

japa involves a young prostitute sent by a malicious king, Rāmacandra Khān, to allure and entice the ascetic Haridāsa away from his *japa* practices. Seeking to secure her spiritual well-being without humiliating her by spurning her advances, the compassionate Haridāsa promises to ful ll her seductive proposals,

just as soon as he has nished his daily chanting practice. This, however, consisted of three hundred thousand repetitions of the

Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* noted above, which took all day and night to complete, leaving no time for any liaison with the prostitute. So the

promise was renewed the next day. The young lady waited patiently

and respectfully, while this went on for three days. On the third day:

Bowing to the Ṭhākura and to the *tulasī* (plant sacred to Kṛṣṇa), [37]

she sat in the doorway and listened to the names, saying, "Hari

Hari." "The names will certainly be nished today," said Haridāsa,

"and today I shall ful ll your desire." And while he was still at *kīrtana*, the end of the night came. And in the company of the Ṭhākura, the prostitute's mind was turned. Bowing deeply she fell at

the feet of the Ṭhākura, and humbly told him the story of

Rāmacandra Khān. "As a prostitute I have committed in nite sins;

be merciful and save me, wretched as I am." Ṭhākura said: "I know

all about the Khān. He is ignorant and stupid, so I do not take o ense from him. That day [when you came] I was going to go from

this place, but I remained for three more days to save you." The prostitute said, "Be gracious and instruct me; what should I do, that

the agonies of *saṁsāra* pass from me?" Ṭhākura said, "Give the goods of your house to a *brāhmaṇa*, then come to this house and remain here. Take the name incessantly and serve *tulasī*, and quickly you will gain the feet of Kṛṣṇa." So the prostitute took the orders of her guru.… She shaved her head and remained with one cloth in the

house, and night and day she took the name three lakhs [three hundred thousand] times. She served the *tulasī*, fasted, [only]

chewing; and as she controlled her senses, *prema* [love of God]

manifested itself. She became a famous Vaiṣṇava, a very great

person, and many great Vaiṣṇavas went to have *darśana* [a visit] of her. (*Antya-līlā* 3.120–34) Here we see the portrayal of the purifying e ects of *mantra* even on those who happen to be merely in the vicinity of the chanter.

Thus although these terms have porous boundaries (as we see

with the usage of *kīrtana* in the Haridāsa narrative above, for what is more typically considered *japa*), *kīrtana* usually represents the communal and

congregational chanting of *mantras*, the names of *Iśvara*, or brief repeated devotional phrases about *Īśvara*'s activities.

Saṅkīrtana features this even more so—indeed, in the hagiography of Caitanya, the *saṅkīrtana* points to public chanting in the streets

accompanied by music and dancing (popularized in the West by a modern branch of the Gauḍīya tradition, ISKCON, better known as

the Hare Krishna Movement38). In contrast, *japa*, which focuses on very short *mantras*, is personal, quiet, meditative, and performed in a more secluded and private manner. We can also mention here

another term, *bhajana*, which overlaps in signi cance and content with the term *kīrtana* and is also often a public practice but tends to refer to devotional hymns—that is, entire phrases, sentences, or even long narrative sequences that ow from verse to verse—about the stories of *Īśvara* inspired by the epics and Purāṇas (such as, in the case of Kṛṣṇa, from the *Bhāgavata*'s tenth book). These are often set to more intricate devotional *rāgas* (melodies) and may be accompanied by more sophisticated instrumentation than is the case with *kīrtana*. *Kīrtana*, in partial contrast, tends to feature the basic names and *mantras* associated with the various *Īśvara* forms or very short, simple, and succinct phrases connected with their activities.

These are encapsulated in less elaborate melodies repeated over and

over again to simple musical accompaniment that involves the

participation of larger numbers of people than typically is the case

with *bhajana*. But all these terms overlap considerably.

Finally, since, as with all processes of *bhakti*, the goal is to develop love of *Īśvara*, one should chant the speci c names that one holds dear, says Jīva, so that this love (*rāga*) can develop (*anu* 263).

In other words, the *mantra* one selects should correspond to the manifestation of *Īśvara* toward whom one is attracted. We will discuss some

of the ways such attraction may develop later. Also, as

with the rst *bhakti yoga* process of *śravaṇa*, the focus of chanting optimally also revolves around the progression of names, forms,

qualities, and pastimes.

Smaraṇa (Remembering)

Jīva quotes the following *Bhāgavata* verse as best de ning *smaraṇa*, the third practice of *bhakti yoga*: "*Yoga* has been taught … as being that by which the mind is withdrawn from everything else, and

xed on Me [Kṛṣṇa]" (XI.13.14). In other words, in *smaraṇa* one thinks of (remembers) Kṛṣṇa at all times. Absorbing all of one's thoughts in God39 is actually the ultimate goal of *vaidhī bhakti* and repeatedly stressed as the ultimate goal of all *yoga* in the *Gītā*: "Of all *yogīs*, the one who performs *bhakti* to Me with his innermost self absorbed in Me is the best of all those engaged in *yoga* (VI.47); "Listen once more again to my highest, most intimate of all

teachings.… Fix your mind on Me and become My *bhakta*"

(XVIII.64–65). 40 Jīva notes that remembrance is possible only if the heart is pure—that is, freed from mundane desires—hence *kīrtana* as a purifying practice is an essential prerequisite to being able to keep

Īśvara in one's thoughts at all times. But when the mind is withdrawn from mundane engagements and xed on God in this

way, "Kṛṣṇa … gives His own self to one who remembers Him"

(X.80.11). Thus, where *śravaṇa* is the initiator of *bhakti*, and *kīrtana* the primary active puri catory practice, constant *smaraṇa* is the actual goal.

A comment about the psychological mechanisms of *smaraṇa*:

bhakti meditation, as with any other type of activity performed by the mind, is a mental construct—that is to say, it consists of creative

imaging made of *saṁskāras*. *Saṁskāras* are nothing other than impressions of previous sense experiences. Since the senses cannot

perceive the divine forms of *Īśvara* (for example, see *Gītā* 11.8), the practitioner can only imagine a form made from the imprints of conventional experience. This, incidentally, is why we will nd the

Bhāgavata so frequently provides vivid and colorful personal descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's forms and ornaments, which become

standardized by dint of constant repetition. Such repetition aids in

the process of mental imaging during *smaraṇa*. The actual divine

form is, of course, made of *Brahman* "stu " (called *suddha sattva*) transcendent to the senses, but the *yogī* can still construe a form made out of *prakṛtic saṁskāras* (*cintāmaya*) that best corresponds to these descriptions. As with any form or deity, as we will see later in the practice of *arcana*, worship, *Īśvara* can manifest personal presence in that mentally constructed form (which is in fact a deity

made of mind stu) if the endeavor—the *smaraṇa*— is permeated with *bhakti*. Nonetheless, in terms of the psychological mechanics involved, if the text informs us Kṛṣṇa is blue like a monsoon cloud

(which is closer to black than blue), 41 we can meditate on Kṛṣṇa's color only by utilizing a blue of our *prakṛtic* experience. Likewise with His ute, the ingredients in His *līlās*, or anything else—one can draw only from our repertoire of mundane experiences to attempt to conceive of these or to construct a visual narrative when engaging

in *smaraṇa* type practices, until one attains an actual vision of God.

However, such practices are no di erent from that of *jñāna yoga*, where one has to keep the *saṁskāra* of one's ultimate *ātman* nature always in mind, until the *ātman* is perceived in its own right (*Yoga Sūtras* I.3). This too can only involve xing the mind on the "idea"

of an *ātman*. Even Patañjali's *citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*, "stilling of all states of mind"—namely, the proposal to transcend mental imaging

altogether—is (until experienced) a mental construct, idea, or

ideation. Any thought occurring in the mind can be made only of

saṁskāras, which are in turn made of *sattva guṇa*—one of the three base metaphysical components of *prakṛti*. The thoughts themselves are not *Brahman* stu . Likewise with *Īśvara smaraṇa* in *bhakti*. We will discuss this further in "Hierarchies of Bliss" and also the notion of divine presence permeating some form made of a *prakṛtic*

substance—be it a mental form, as in *smaraṇa*, or a form made of

some other substance including metal or stone—in the process of *arcana*, deity worship, the fth of the nine practices.

Also, readers familiar with the *Yoga Sūtras* may be reminded here of Patañjali's *Īśvara-praṇidhāna*, "dedication to *Īśvara*" (I.23–27).

Īśvara is highly recommended in the *Yoga Sūtras* as the best object upon which to x the mind after it has been withdrawn from

everything else42 (although the *bhakti* element in the *Yoga Sūtras* is what I sometimes refer to as *Bhakti* Lite in comparison with the *bhakti* XXX Extra-Strength of the *Bhāgavata*!). In fact, Jīva expands *smaraṇa* into a ve-step sequence that closely mirrors the three highest limbs of the progressive eight-limb (*aṣṭāṅga*) schema in the *Yoga Sūtras*, except with bolstered devotional avorings (*anu* 278).

Smaraṇa itself, to think of *Īśvara* according to one's inclination, initiates Jīva's vefold sequence. This is followed by the second step, *dhāraṇā* (Patañjali's sixth limb), withdrawal of the mind from external objects and focus of it on *Īśvara* in a general way; then the third step, *dhyāna* (Patañjali's seventh limb), contemplation on *Īśvara*'s name, form, qualities, and pastimes; the fourth step, *dhruvānusmṛti*, xed remembrance of *Īśvara* owing without interruption like a continuous ow of nectar (interjected between Patañjali's sixth and seventh limbs);43 and eventually the fth and nal step,

samādhi (Patañjali's eighth limb), when only the object of awareness is manifest, without any subjective or self-awareness.

However, and very important, unlike the general understanding of

samādhi as re ected in the *Yoga Sūtras*,[44] where the ultimate goal is for awareness to be immersed in its own nature (*svarūpa*, *Yoga Sūtras* I.3, the *ātman/Brahman* of Vedānta), the ultimate object of awareness in *bhakti samādhi*, as in all its preliminary stages, is exclusively *Īśvara*. In other words, in the state of *samādhi*, says Jīva, a person may have a direct vision of *Īśvara*. This is not a mental image made of *saṁskāras*, but a direct perception or experience of *Īśvara* as a personal distinct Being with full transcendent form and qualities made of pure *Brahman*[45] appearing present as an object of consciousness (internally and/or externally, as we will see in the Tale of Prince Dhruva) before the awareness of the meditating *bhakta*. The *bhāgavatas* claim that the bliss ensuing from such a vision far eclipses the bliss experienced when awareness becomes reimmersed in its own nature, which is the goal of generic yoga.

Thus, raising a theme we will later discuss at length, Vyāsa

preferred to immerse his consciousness in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes than in

the bliss of the *ātman*: "Although he was xed in the bliss of the self and was devoid of any other thought, his heart was attracted to the

enchanting *līlās* of the infallible Kṛṣṇa" (XII.12.68). When Nārada urges Vyāsa to "recall, by means of *samādhi*, the activities of Kṛṣṇa"

(I.5.13)—in other words, to engage in *smaraṇa*—Vyāsa does so, and

"in his mind, which, completely puri ed by the practice of *bhakti yoga*, was fully concentrated, he saw that perfect Person" (I.7.4). [46]

This direct vision of God is the fth and nal stage of *smaraṇa* and, hence, of *bhakti yoga*, in Jīva's ve-stage sequence.

Perhaps the most visually replete and startlingly extreme example

of such visions in Kṛṣṇa literature is, again, exhibited by Caitanya Mahāprabhu (Prabhu, below). We should note that while some of the ecstatic bodily symptoms that he exhibits appear almost grotesque to conventional perception, they are physical manifestations of the highest states of internal ecstasy—as we noted previously, the material body is poorly equipped to handle unfamiliar dosages of ecstatic experience: The whole night long, Prabhu sang *kīrtana* loudly. Suddenly Prabhu heard the sound of Kṛṣṇa's ute, and absorbed in his *bhāva* [devotional meditation], he left that place. Though the doors were barred, absorbed in that *bhāva* Prabhu went outside.… Then Svarūpa Gosvāmī, taking the *bhaktas* with him, lit a lamp and searched for Prabhu. Searching here and there, they went eventually to the lion-gate, where they found Prabhu among the cows. His hands and feet were pulled into his stomach; he had the shape of a tortoise. There was froth on his lips, his whole body trembled, and there were tears in his eyes.

Fallen unconscious, he was like a *kuṣmāṇḍa* fruit; externally he was sti and rigid; inwardly he was overwhelmed with *ānanda* [bliss].…

Many tried hard, but he remained unconscious. The *bhaktas* raised Prabhu up and brought him home. Loudly in his ear they sang Kṛṣṇa *saṇkīrtana*, and after a long time Mahāprabhu regained consciousness. When he came back to consciousness, his hands and feet came out again, and his body was as it had been before. Getting up, Prabhu sat down and looked this way and that, and said to Svarūpa, "Where have you brought me? I heard the sound of the ute and went to Vṛndāvana, and I saw in the pasture

Vrajendranandana [Kṛṣṇa] playing his ute. By the sound of the

ute, he secretly brought Rādhā to the *kuñja*-bower, and Kṛṣṇa went to the *kuñja* to play there. I followed after him, and my ears were conquered by the sound of his ornaments. There he sported with the

gopīs, laughing and joking, and hearing the sound of his voice, my ears were thrilled. Then you all came, making a great uproar, and

took me away by force." (*Antya-līlā* 17.8–26)47

We will see that Kṛṣṇa's eternal divine *Brahman* realm called Goloka, where Caitanya's consciousness was transported in this

account, both is coextensive with this realm of *prakṛti* and transcends it. It is *Brahman* (pure consciousness), but an expression of *Brahman* with divine forms and qualities (*saguṇa Brahman*). We will discuss this later in detail, but for now we will just note that such accessing of the *saguṇa Brahman* dimension and direct perception of God is the highest stage of *samādhi* in the Kṛṣṇa tradition. This is a very far cry from the contentless self-awareness

of the *ātman* that is the goal of generic Patañjali-type *samādhi* and most *jñāna* traditions.

Pāda-sevana (Service to *Īśvara*'s Feet)

Pāda-sevana, the fourth practice, has various synonyms, Jīva points out, such as *sevā* and *paricaryā*, all of which denote service to *Īśvara*.

He does not have much to say about what this fourth category of *bhakti yoga* comprises in terms of speci cs, but we can recall from

"De nition of *Bhakti*" that most of the de nitions of *bhakti* scattered in various texts featured the ideal of service, which we noted is synonymous with love. While the word "service" sometimes carries

a negative connotation associated with servitude, we can

understand from our own human relationships that the more we

deeply love another person, the more we try to please him or her

with service.

Since in traditional Sanskrit theological exposition all practices must be supported by reference to the sacred texts, Jīva, as always,

strives to illustrate the practice of *pāda-sevana* by quoting the *Bhāgavata*: "For one who is faithful and desires to hear, attraction to the stories of Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa) develops by means of service to the

sages and assisting great saints, and dwelling in holy places"

(I.2.16). The *Gītā* also uses the term *sevā* speci cally in reference to service rendered to the accomplished practitioners in gratitude for

receiving guidance and instruction: "Through humble submission,

inquiry and service, the wise, those who have perceived the Truth,

will instruct you in knowledge" (IV.34). Service to such *guru* gures who impart knowledge is all-important in almost all *bhakti*

traditions, but service to the *bhaktas* in general is also greatly stressed, as will be discussed in a later section. Jīva adds to this various other activities that constitute service: seeing, touching, and

circumambulating the Deity; following the Deity in temple

processions; and visiting *Īśvara*'s temples, the *Gaṅgā* river, and holy places associated with *Īśvara*'s incarnations and deeds. These types of *pāda-sevana* activities are some of the most visible expressions of *bhakti* in India, as is the case with other devotional traditions of the world.

A much-loved example of service in the hagiography of Caitanya

Mahāprabhu was demonstrated by King Pratāparudra of Orissa (East

India) during the famous annual cart festival in the town of Purī.

Here, Kṛṣṇa in the form of the massive Jagannātha Deity leaves His temple and is transported on gigantic chariots (from which derives the English-borrowing “juggernaut”) to the Guṇḍicā temple, in reenactment of Kṛṣṇa’s meeting with the *gopīs* in Kurukṣetra:48

Pratāparudra himself, with his ministers, was among the followers of Mahāprabhu to see the *vijaya* [triumphal procession]. There were powerful personal attendants [of Jagannātha], strong as mad elephants, who with their hands brought Jagannātha out for the *vijaya*.… Who has the strength to cause … Jagannātha to move? By his own desire he went on his pleasure-trip [to the Guṇḍicā temple].… Then Prataparudra performed his personal service: with a golden broom he swept the path. He moistened the path with water and sandalwood; he performed these menial tasks [even though] he sat on the royal lion-throne. Though he is elevated, the king performs menial services, and thus is a receptacle for the grace of Jagannātha. Seeing these services, Mahāprabhu was delighted, and because of these services, [the king] gained the grace of Mahāprabhu. (*Madhya Līlā*, 13.3–17) The descendants of the king still reenact this service of sweeping the road before the procession every year.

As with the previous three processes of *bhakti*, service is purifying: “The attraction to serve His lotus feet, growing day by day, immediately washes away from the ascetics the dirt

accumulated over unlimited lifetimes, just like the *Gaṅgā* river does”

(IV.21.31). And service, too, like all forms of *bhakti*, is fully satisfying, hence *bhaktas* “do not desire any favor other than the service of Kṛṣṇa’s feet” (X.51.55). 49 We wish to repeat here that the notion of service, which may carry with it negative connotations in other contexts, is almost synonymous with love and devotion in the

Bhāgavata. To love is to render acts of devotion that please the beloved. *Pāda-sevana* is essentially this. And true love must be reciprocal between lover and beloved. Consider, in this light, the following verses spoken by Viṣṇu, which we will encounter in the Tale of King Ambarīṣa: O *brāhmaṇa*! I am under the control of my

bhaktas—it is as if I have no independence. My heart has been captured by the saints (*sādhus*) and *bhaktas*, and I, in turn, am dear to the *bhakta* community. Without My *bhaktas* and the *sādhus*, I do not desire even My own self, O *brāhmaṇa*, nor Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune, who is very intimate to Me. I am the supreme goal for My *bhaktas*. They have renounced spouse, home, sons, great wealth, and their very life and approached Me for shelter. How am I capable of

rejecting them? The *sādhus*, who see all beings with equal vision, have their hearts bound to Me. They control Me with their devotion,

just as a chaste wife controls a true husband. Satis ed by My service, they do not even desire the four types of liberation, 50 which are available through service, to say nothing of any other temporal

thing. The *sādhus* are My heart, and I am the heart of the *sādhus*.

They do not know anything other than Me, and I can barely think of

anything other than them. (IX.4.63–68) ***Arcana* (Worship)**

Arcana here refers speci cally to deity worship, certainly the most visible aspect of *bhakti* and of Hinduism in general. Jīva spends some time on it: [Worship is] the faithful e ort in installing, either

alone or in coordination with others, My Deity (*arcā*); the work of

[providing them with] gardens, groves, pleasure grounds, and the construction of temples and towns; rendering service to My temples

sincerely like a servant by cleaning, plastering with cow-dung, and

creating ornamental designs; and in being free from ego and pride,

and not advertising one's acts.… Whatever is considered desirable in

the world, and whatever is held most dear to the self, that should be

o ered to Me [manifest as the Deity]. By this, one attains the

eternal. (XI.11.38–41) The primary traditional Sanskrit textual sources that deal with the prescriptive details of deity worship extensively are genres called the *Āgamas* and *Pañcarātras*. The various procedures described in these texts begin with invoking (*āvāhana*) the presence of *Īśvara* into the Deity and thereafter caring for Him with love and devotion. Here, again, an important

metaphysical consideration that needs to be established before

considering the speci cs of *arcana* is that the Deity—as with the *mantra*—is considered nondi erent from *Īśvara*'s own form. It is not a symbol, substitute, or some sort of mental prop: *Īśvara*'s actual presence is invoked in *āvāhana*. This is somewhat similar to the notion of "transubstantiation" in Catholicism, where the bread and wine are considered to be transformed into the body and blood of

Christ actually, not guratively. Similarly, *Īśvara* is considered to be personally present within the Deity, by permeating or "merging"

(*līna*) into it. Jīva quotes the *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra*, here: “Whatever may be Your transcendent nature, and whatever may be Your form

made of pure consciousness (*jñāna-māyā*), may all that together, merged into this [Deity] body, awaken”51 (*anu* 286). The Deity, he continues, is a special seat within which *Īśvara* manifests (*anu* 289). 52 We should thus avoid using terms such as “statue,” with its implication of a lifeless representational object made of inert matter such as marble that copies or represents something beyond itself— or worse, “idol,” with its Abrahamic implication of a false god.

The typical objection to all this raised by, for example, certain missionaries in colonial India was that the Supreme all-pervading Godhead cannot surely be reduced to a meager lifeless stone or material representation; God is unlimited and in nite. How can one presume to imagine that the all-pervading in nite transcendent

Being has been con ned within a limited, inert, base material

substance?

What is idolatry but a practical treason against Reason, the royal crown of our manhood, the setting up of the sensuous

Imagination in its stead? If, then, any vision of God, as the Being who transcends all sense, be possible in any degree to

man, it must be attained through the inner and not through

the outer eye.… Thought, not sense, must eventually be

recognized as the true organ of religion.… The In nite and the

Eternal, however they are to be apprehended, cannot possibly

be represented in nite form by even the most perfect e orts

of human art.… If ever man could construct a material image

of God, it would only be possible if He showed the pattern of Himself on the highest mount of inspiration, but the Hindoo idolmaker has had no such vision … and can only draw the forms of his imagery out of himself, and his images can only at the best represent his own subjective moods of feeling or aspiration, and not the known, transcendent, divine reality. (Hastie 1882, 15–17) The Hindu response to this, predictably, is that it is Hastie's assumptions that limit God: it is precisely because God is unlimited that, in addition to manifesting in thought as Hastie would require, He can not only become manifest to the sensual eyes, should He so choose, but also become manifest in stone, and disallowing this possibility is itself curtailing the omnipotency of the Supreme Being. As Jīva puts it, although *Īśvara* is all-pervading, he particularizes Himself in the form of the *śālagrāma* stones, 53 and other such forms (*anu* 294). And, again, it is *Īśvara*'s very unlimitedness that allows Him to manifest in unlimited deities simultaneously, while still maintaining a full presence and personal form in His unlimited divine *Brahman* realms of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka (or, more precisely, unlimited divine presences in unlimited divine realms, as we will discover). And at the same time, *Īśvara* is both omnipresent and

omniconstitutional in all things of *prakṛti* (*Gītā* X.41). Of course, even the stone is a product of *prakṛti*, Kṛṣṇa's impersonal *śakti* ("power"), and in this sense also Kṛṣṇa, but the Deity is more than this. This is not some Hindu variant of pantheism. While the stone substance of the Deity is made of

Kṛṣṇa's *śakti*, Kṛṣṇa as *Śaktimān* ("possessor of *śakti*")—the distinct personal Godhead who is the source of all powers, as

will be discussed in "The Object of *Bhakti*"—enters into and transforms the metaphysics of the stone, converting it into a

vehicle of divine presence. Yet *Īśvara* is not con ned by this act of grace, simultaneously remaining a distinct independent

Being.

We might add here one other consideration raised by a Hindu

more or less contemporary with Hastie against the latter's

assumption that "thought, not sense, must eventually be recognized

as the true organ of religion." Bhaktivinoda Thakur's argument here

is subtle: The Supreme Lord does not have a material form, but is

endowed with a transcendent spiritual form called *sat-cit-ānanda-vigraha*.[54] The fullest manifestation of this transcendent form cannot be perceived by the conditioned *jīvas* [*ātmans*]. For this reason, in whatever fashion man conceives of God in this world, his conception must assume a degree of idolatry … Śri Kṛṣṇa can be perceived in the heart, to some extent, through the help of divine

love. When this form is perceived in the mind … it assumes a greater degree of phenomenality, while being served through the

body and senses in physical form, *Śrī Mūrti* [the Deity] assumes the greatest level of phenomenality (quoted in Das, 192).

To understand the full import of this statement, we must bear in mind that throughout much of Indic thought, the mind is considered to be a nonconscious material element extraneous to the real self. In the Sāṅkhya metaphysics of the *Bhāgavata* (which, with some sect-speci c taxonomic variants here and there, became the dominant metaphysical and physical descriptive model of reality of the Vedānta and Purāṇa traditions), mind and intelligence are material substances that do not di er in ultimate essence from the other material substances—the gross elements of earth, water, re, air, and ether—except that they are more subtle in nature (which simply means they contain more of the *sattva guṇa* and less of the *tamas*, discussed in the next section). They are all *prakṛti*, matter, and external coverings of the *ātman*.

So Bhaktivinoda's argument, then, is that *any* statement or notion emanating from human thought pertaining to God—such as that God is "love," or "good," or "all-powerful," or "almighty," or "just," or "beyond human comprehension," or anything whatsoever including "God is," all and any such declarations—is idolatry, if one is to adopt the logic of those theistic traditions critical of Hindu deity worship. This is because all such attributes are constructions formed by the mind or intellect, and the mind and intellect are *prakṛtic* matter in *Bhāgavata* metaphysics; they merely contain more of the *sattva guṇa* than the *tamas guṇa*.[55] Indeed, conceiving of God *in any way whatsoever* means, by de nition, constructing a conceptual (that is, a mental or intellectual) material image of Him, but this is still subtle matter distinct

from the Deity. Thus, for Bhaktivinoda, whether the image is made of the material elements

of stone or whether it is a conceptual image made of thought, “there

is no di erence between the two because even mind and thought

are material” (Das, 193). Therefore, taking this to its logical conclusion, *there is no other way to conceive of, or discuss, God except through image worship*: “Image worship is therefore the foundation of human religion” (ibid.). Hindus construct a variety of images of stone and other denser material substances in addition to constructing the variety of intellectual images of God evidenced in

the elaborate theologies of the subcontinent; other theistic traditions

have restricted themselves to worshipping intellectual images: both are worshipping images.

In any event, returning to the logic of *arcana* from the point of view of its adherents, just as our own *ātman* permeates our physical body made of the material elements and animates it with

consciousness, so *Īśvara* the Supreme *Ātman* permeates the physical form of the Deity, which is also made of the elements, and animates

it with divine presence. The di erence, of course, is we are forced

into a body not by any immediate choice of our own, but according

to our *karma*, 56 whereas *Īśvara* enters the Deity as an act of grace bound only by *bhakti*. This act of grace is so that the *bhakta*, enveloped in matter and thus unable to perceive his or her own *ātman*, to say nothing of perceiving the Supreme *Ātman*, can worship *Īśvara* directly in a very immediate personal manner when *Īśvara* manifests in a material form. It is to facilitate *arcana*, worship, that *Īśvara* does so, and indeed, in the twelfth-century South Indian Vaiṣṇava tradition stemming from the theologican Rāmānuja, *Iśvara* in the Deity (*arcā-vigraha*) is one of the ve types of *avatāra* (divine descent). In his *Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta*, Rūpa de nes *avatāra*

as a form of the Lord “manifesting in the universe to accomplish a new purpose either personally or through some other agency” (II.1.2).[57] And as is the case with *mantra*—which is a sonic *avatāra* (*nāma-avatāra*), and indeed all forms of *bhakti yoga*— *Īśvara* reveals His presence in the Deity in proportion to the sincerity of the *bhakti* rendered. And the same, of course, holds true for the Goddess *Īśvarī* forms.

In fact, it is very common in India, almost ubiquitous, in fact, to

nd stories associated with local temples, where the Deity interacts

with His or Her devotees in various active and very personable ways. One of the best-known stories in Jīva’s tradition, for example,

is that of Sākṣī-Gopāla (Kṛṣṇa the “Witness”). The context of the story is of a promise that was made before the Gopāla (Kṛṣṇa) Deity

in Vṛndāvana between two *brāhmaṇas* from the south of India, while on pilgrimage in the north. Upon their return home down south, this

promise was unwillingly broken because of family pressure by the

elder *brāhmaṇa*. The younger *brāhmaṇa* therefore returns north to request that the Deity come back south to his village in order to bear witness to the promise made such that the elder *brāhmaṇa* would not incur the sin of breaking a promise. Note the very personal and almost banterlike tone between the devotee and Deity

in the following passage—the *brāhmaṇa* even admonishing the Deity not to commit a sin! This is typical of the relationship between devotee and Deity and so re ective of the intimate “real life”

relationship with *Īśvara* that lies at the heart of *bhakti yoga*: Then the younger *brāhmaṇa* went to Vṛndāvana and bowing to the ground he

related the whole tale [to the Deity of Kṛṣṇa] … “that the promise of

a *brāhmaṇa* be broken—this is very bad. Knowing these things, bear witness … he who knows and does not bear witness commits a sin.”

… Kṛṣṇa said: “No one has heard of an image moving.” The

brāhmaṇa said, “[In that case], as an image, how do you speak words? You are not an image, you are the manifest

Vrajendranāndana58 [Kṛṣṇa]. Will you do this thing, which is not done, for the *brāhmaṇa*?” Laughing, Gopāla [Kṛṣṇa] said, “Listen, O

brāhmaṇa, I shall follow after you. Do not turn around to look at me; if you look at me I shall remain in the place [where you looked].

You will only hear the sound of my ankle bells, and from that sound

you will know that I am moving." The next day, having begged

leave, the *brāhmaṇa* departed, and Gopāla followed after him.…

Moving in this way, the *brāhmaṇa* came to his own country, and nearing his village, he re ected in his mind … "I shall go and say to

the people that the witness has come." … Re ecting thus, the

brāhmaṇa turned around and looked; and smiling Gopāla … was there … when they heard of it, all the people were astonished. They

all came to see the witness, and when they saw Gopāla, they bowed

to the ground.… And the king of that country came, hearing of the wonderful thing, and he gained the highest pleasure when he saw

Gopāla. The king built a temple there, and caused the service to be

instituted. It was called Sākṣīgopāla [Gopāla the witness], and it became famous. (*Madhya Līlā* V.86–117) Countless temples on the

subcontinent, both majestic and pan-Indian, as well as humble and

local, have such narratives associated with them.

Deity worship lies at the very core of all forms of *bhakti* practices of real-life Hinduism, in terms both of the private practices of dedicated individuals and, more visibly, of practices in temple

settings. Its description thus merits quoting at length: One who wishes to speedily cut away the knot in the heart [desire] of the transcendent *ātman* should worship Lord Keśava (Kṛṣṇa) according

to the prescriptions expressed in the Tantra texts.59 Upon receiving the permission of the *ācārya* (*guru*), and after having received instruction from him, one should worship the Supreme Being in a Deity form that re ects one's personal preference. In a clean state, seated facing [the Deity], after purifying this lump of a body by *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) and other

practices, as well as protecting it by invoking various names of *Īśvara* into di erent body parts (*nyāsa*), one should worship Hari. One should prepare the paraphernalia, surface, oneself, and the Deity; consecrate the seat; perform *nyāsa* to one's heart and other parts of the body; 60 and prepare the ingredients for worship such as water for washing the

feet, *etc.* Then, with concentration, one should invoke the presence

of the Divinity either in the Deity or in the heart, and perform worship with the *mūla-mantra*. 61 One should worship the various limbs of the Deity, as well as His associates, 62 with: the *mantra* corresponding to that Deity's speci c form;63 foot washing water, welcome beverage, and mouthwash, etc.; then bathing, clothing, and ornaments; then scents, owers, unbroken grains, and garlands,

as well as incense and ghee lamps. Having completed the *pūjā*

(ritual worship) according to the prescriptions, one should o er obeisance to Hari. Meditating on oneself as made of Him,64 one should worship the Deity form (*mūrti*). One should place the remnants on one's head, and respectfully replace the Deity back in its place. 65 In this way, one who worships *Īśvara*, the soul of everything, in re, the sun, water, and other such natural

phenomenon, and in the guest, or in one's own heart, is quickly liberated. (XI.3.47–55) This may all sound rather complex and

ritualistic, but the whole idea is to develop *prema*, divine love (XI.27.32). Ultimately, it is not rituals and o erings that count (since *Īśvara* owns everything anyway), but *bhakti*. As Kṛṣṇa states in the *Gītā* (twice repeating the word *bhakti* in the same verse for emphasis): "If one o ers Me a ower, leaf, fruit, or water with *bhakti*, I accept that o ering of *bhakti* from one sincerely devoted to Me" (IX.26). Or, in the words of the *Bhāgavata*: "Even just water o ered to Me faithfully with *bhakti* is dear to Me … but even great abundance o ered by one who is not a *bhakta* does not cause satisfaction" (XI.27.18–19). It is the internal meditation of love that is the goal, not the external forms of *pūjā*.66

In fact, despite the ritualistically elaborate, caste-and gender-exclusivistic, "high" forms *arcana* can take in elite Hindu orthopraxy, its expressions are, in fact, highly exible, allowing anyone, anywhere, to engage in some form of this practice in modest, intimate modes. So, for example, the Deity can be made from any among eight substances most readily available, with a

mental option ensuring that there is no one who cannot partake of

this process even if deprived of all material facilities: "There are eight kinds of deities (*pratimā*); they may be made of: stone, wood, metal, sandalwood or mud, paint [a picture], sand, mind, or

precious gem." If one has material facilities, then one should o er

one's beloved the very best one can a ord, but if one is utterly impoverished, a mere o ering of heartfelt *bhakti* is perfection: "My worship in the Deity should be performed with the choicest articles,

but it can be performed by my sincere *bhakta* with whatever is available, or even just in the mind" (XI.27.15). 67 The important thing is to engage worship as a practice to assist in the cultivation of *bhakti*, not for ostentatious display.

Arcana is especially recommended for householders, says Jīva:

"This path, by which the Supreme Person is worshipped faithfully with one's wealth obtained by pure means, brings good fortune to

the householders" (X.84.37). This is so because householders are usually more challenged in keeping the mind always xed on *Īśvara*

than those who have renounced all worldly possessions, for obvious

reasons. And channeling their wealth into deity worship helps them

curb the tendency to become miserly, says Jīva. Moreover, if

undertaken according to the prescriptions, deity worship assists

them in cultivating the mental *yogic* discipline of strict regulation (*anu* 283).

As with *bhakti* in general, worship can either be performed purely, with no motive other than to cultivate devotion for *Īśvara*, or be mixed with *karma*, desire for some personal material gain. We will discuss this type of "mixed *bhakti*" later, but Jīva notes at this point that those whose worship of the Deity is mixed tend to be people who are merely blindly following social norms picked up from here or there, or following family traditions and so forth (*anu* 284). However, the ideal, as Kṛṣṇa Himself states, is to become free

of personal desire and seek only *Īśvara*: "It is through the practice of *bhakti yoga* without motive, that one attains Me" (XI.27.53). Either way, whatever be the motive: "Worshipping Me in the above ways

through the path of *kriyā yoga* by means of either Vedic or Tantric[68]

rites, a person attains from Me the desired success, both in this life

and the next" (XI.27.49).

There are many other practices subsumed under the category of *arcana*, says Jīva, such as celebrating festive days like Kṛṣṇa's birthday, observing vows during the months of *Kārtika*, [69] fasting from grains on the bimonthly *ekādaśī* d[ays,][70] wearing *tilak* sacred [clay,][71] and others (*anu* 298–99). We can brie y mention residence in sacred places or the very commonly undertaken activity of

pilgrimage to them. We have discussed how *Īśvara* can manifest in sound and in the Deity, so, similarly, in many Hindu *bhakti* traditions, places associated with *Īśvara* represent yet another type of divine manifestation: "Lord Hari is eternally present in Mathurā

[where He took birth]" (X.1.28); "Even today, out of a ection, Lord

Hari appears to His devotees who reside in that holy place, in whatever form that they desire" (V.7.2). Indeed, so bene cial is living in holy places to

the development of *bhakti* that Rūpa, who personally resided in Kṛṣṇa's childhood abode of Vṛndāvana (Vraj), along with Jīva and the other *Gosvāmīs*, wrote the following in his *Upadeśāmṛta*: "Living in Vraj, and following those who are attached to Kṛṣṇa, one should spend all one's time gradually engaging one's

mind and tongue in remembering and chanting the name, form, and

deeds of Kṛṣṇa. This is the essence of spiritual instruction" (8).

One further element that Jīva discusses under the rubric of

arcana, which is very much stressed in this tradition, is not o ending the *bhaktas*: "Hari … does not accept worship from those who commit o ense to the righteous [devotees] who want nothing

[but Him]. The intelligence of such people is perverted due to intoxication from learning, wealth, family, or accomplishments"

(IV.31.21). Such o enses "destroy everything," says Jīva (*anu* 301).

The Tale of King Ambarīṣa in part 2 will illustrate this point. The

bhakta is as dear to *Īśvara*—and *Īśvarī*—as they are to the *bhakta*. Of course, Kṛṣṇa favors no one, as He states in the *Gītā*, but this indicates that no one is excluded from the opportunity of becoming

a *bhakta*. If one avails oneself of this opportunity by choosing to

turn to Him in a devotional manner, one is favored, hence the frequent statements that *bhaktas* are especially dear to Kṛṣṇa (*Gītā*

IX.29–32).

But, in fact, while the *bhaktas* are as dear to *Īśvara* as He is to them, all living entities are nothing other than manifestations of *Īśvara*. Hence, Jīva adds to all this that the highest form of *arcana* is the worship of all living entities. 72 He points out that worshipping the Deity while o ending other

living entities is useless: Therefore, some perform worship to Hari (Kṛṣṇa) faithfully and reverentially in

the form of the Deity, but, despite being performed, worship does

not provide any bene t for one who hates his fellow beings. The bodies of men, animals, sages, and celestials have been created by

Hari, and it is He who then dwells in these bodies (*pureṣu*) in the form of the *jīva*; hence He is called *puruṣa*. (VII.14.37–40)73

The idea here is that the *ātman* within all beings is a part of *Īśvara*, as is the body within which the *ātman* is embodied. To recognize *Īśvara* in the Deity but not in all beings because of ignorance is o ensive to *Īśvara*. Kṛṣṇa ends the *Uddhava Gītā* in book 11 on a similar note, stressing that seeing all beings as nothing other than *Īśvara* is in fact the highest form of worship: One should perceive Me as manifest in all beings and in oneself.… A *paṇḍita* is considered to be one who sees everything equally, whether it be a *brāhmaṇa*,74 a member of the *Pukkaśa* tribe , a thief, one devoted to *brāhmaṇas*, the sun, a spark of re, the gentle or the cruel. Rivalry, envy, abuse, and ego quickly disappear from a person who constantly re ects upon the essence of all people as being Me.… Until [the ability] to see Me

as the essence of all living beings develops, one should worship Me

with the activities of the body, mind, and speech.… I de nitely consider this [attitude]—that the essence of all living entities is in

Me—to be the most e cacious of all practices involving the

activities of one's body, speech, and mind." (XI.29.12–19) ***Vandana***

(O ering Respect)

Jīva has little to say about this limb, noting that *vandana* overlaps with the previous practice of worship. *Vandana* is the attitudinal and functional equivalent of genu ection in Catholicism and usually

refers to bowing or o ering prostrations to *Īśvara* (as manifest, for instance, in the Deity, sacred text, or holy place) or to the *guru* or the *bhaktas*. He comments that there are some *bhaktas* who simply feel unworthy of directly serving the Deity, and these prefer to meditate on Him and engage in the practices of *vandana*. 75 The humble *bhakta* perceives *Īśvara*'s compassion in all situations and thus becomes blissful, says Jīva.

As an aside, one can still nd ascetics today who circumambulate

the holy town of Vṛndāvana, where Kṛṣṇa spent His childhood, by

performing *vandana* along the entire circumference. The distance is approximately ten kilometers, and there are those who perform

obeisance to this form of Kṛṣṇa manifest as sacred space by means of

a full *daṇḍavat*: an elongated prostration on the ground with arms extended. They place a stone where their ngers reach and then

begin the next prostration from that spot, this time placing the stone

at the new spot reached by the ngers at the next *daṇḍavat* (approximately six or seven feet farther). They thus circumambulate

the entire circumference of the holy place, performing an ongoing

sequence of fully prostrated *vandanas* in this way, and may spend weeks before nishing (one can see extreme versions of this where a

person performs a *vandana* of 10876 *daṇḍavats* in one spot before moving to the next). While this is a form of *tapas* (austerity) and may also, perhaps more often than not, re ect the "mixed" *bhakti* of which Jīva will speak later (that is, performed in the hope of some boon), it nonetheless is still a form of *vandana* to *Īśvara* present as holy place.

***Dāsya* (Servitorship)**

Here too Jīva has little to say, as this practice overlaps with the others—in fact, we may have noticed by now that these nine

practices of *bhakti* have porous boundaries between them. He de nes *dāsya* as considering oneself to be a servant of Viṣṇu. As an example of the attitude of servitorship, Jīva selects Uddhava's

statement: "We are your servants, and, since we partake of your remnants—the garlands, ointments, clothes, decorations, and food

enjoyed by you—we will surpass *māyā*" (XI.7.46). The remnants of

the Deity, such as the garlands and other items mentioned here, are

highly valued tokens of divine grace in *bhakti* practice. Typically, any person visiting a temple and having *darśana* (seeing the Deity) will receive some consumable item from the o ciating *brāhmaṇa* (priest), if only a few drops of sacred water. For more fortunate visitors, a garland or more lavish array of foodstu s that had been previously o ered to the Deity might be forthcoming, or some other

item such as mentioned in the verse. In sum, *dāsya* is an attitude of service and, as practice, perhaps best understood as the mental vigilance invested in cultivating this attitude. Where the fourth practice of *bhakti*, *pāda-sevana*, refers to actual physical acts of service, *dāsya*—and the next practice, friendship—refers more to states of mind. Perhaps we can consider these two to be internal practices that are expressed externally through the other practices.

We will again touch upon *dāsya* in the discussion on *bhāva* (loving mood) below and will nd illustrations of it in the stories from the

tenth book in part 3.

***Sakhya* (Friendship)**

As with *dāsya*, servitorship, the practice of *sakhya*, friendship, involves a state of mind (*bhāva*), which in general terms, says Jīva, entails wishing someone's well-being. In *bhakti* it is reciprocal, as Hari is the well-wisher of all by supplying material facilities for the needs of the internal and external senses, as well as by bestowing

pure love for God. It is thus not very di cult to perform, continues Jīva, because *Īśvara*'s feelings of well-being for His *bhaktas* are eternal (*anu* 306). We will discuss the theology of *bhāva*, which will include the *bhāvas* of both *sakhya* and *dāsya*, in more detail under *rāgānugā bhakti* below, drawing from Rūpa's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*.

We will also encounter the delightful exemplars of *sakhya* in some of the stories we have included in this volume from the tenth book. At

this point, Jīva simply draws our attention to a couple of quotes mentioning *sakhya*, as per his method in exemplifying all the elements of *bhakti* he selects for analysis with verses from the *Bhāgavata*: "See the good fortune, O just see the good fortune of Nanda the cowherder and the residents of Vraj! Their friend is the supreme bliss, the eternal absolute *Brahman*!" (X.14.32); "The friends of the infallible Kṛṣṇa, who are peaceful, equanimous, pure,

and a ectionate to all beings, easily attain Kṛṣṇa's abode"

(IV.12.37).

Ātma-nivedana (Self-Surrender)

The last on the list of nine practices, self-surrender, says Jīva, entails

"o ering everything to the Lord, from one's body to one's pure *ātman*" (*anu* 309). This means the cessation of any self-striving, and dedicating all one's activities to, and focusing one's e orts on *Īśvara*.

It can be compared with the selling of a cow, he continues: once sold and given away, the seller invests no more e ort in its

maintenance, as this has become the responsibility of the purchaser

(*anu* 309). Likewise, the devotee considers himself or herself the property of *Īśvara* and has full faith and dependence on *Īśvara* for all material necessities. In such a state of surrender to *Īśvara*, says Jīva, bodily

functions, dressing, and so on are undertaken simply for service, not for any personal interest or motive (see *Gītā* V.9–10 for an expression of this state).

Rukmiṇī, one of Kṛṣṇa's queens, is selected by Jīva as exemplifying the mood of this ninth practice of *bhakti*: "I have clearly chosen You as a husband, dear Kṛṣṇa, and I have hereby surrendered myself to You as wife" (X.52.39). But perhaps the more classic passage viewed as most representative of the extensiveness of

ātma-nivedana, this state of total self-surrender, is one we will nd in the Tale of King Ambarīṣa: He engaged his mind in [meditating

on] the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa; his words in describing the qualities of

Vaikuṇṭha, Viṣṇu's divine *Brahman* adode; his hands in cleaning the temple of Hari and other such acts; and his ears in hearing the beautiful accounts of Acyuta [Kṛṣṇa]. He engaged his eyes in seeing

the temples and deities of Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa], the limbs of his body

in touching the bodies of the servants of God, his sense of smell in

the fragrance of the beautiful *tulāsi* plant [o ered to] the Lord's lotus feet, and his sense of taste in [the food] o ered to God. He used his feet in frequenting the places touched by the feet of Hari,

his head in o ering obeisance to the feet of Hṛṣīkeśa [Kṛṣṇa], and

his desire in service rather than in the ful llment of sensual desires.

He did this to develop a ection for those who have taken shelter of

Viṣṇu, whose glories are supreme. (IX.4.18–20) After outlining

similar examples of those who have attained *bhakti* for Him through this ninth practice of *ātma-nivedana*, Kṛṣṇa Himself concludes:

"What other goal is there left for such a person to attain?!"

(XI.19.24).

We remind the reader that Jīva has divided *bhakti yoga* into *vaidhī,* rule regulated—the nine processes in this preceding section—

and *rāgānugā*, spontaneous, which will occupy us later. There is, of course, much more that can be said about *vaidhī bhakti*. Just as there were variant taxonomies of *yoga* practices in addition to the eight limbs promoted in the *Yoga Sūtras* (there are references in other texts to ve limbs as well as six limbs of *yoga* even as the eight limbs became the "classical" model in later times), 77 so there were various taxonomies of *bhakti* practices in addition to the nine formally presented in texts such as the *Bhāgavata*, which were to become standardized and normalized. Jīva acknowledges that he has not covered everything connected with *vaidhī*, and, in fact, his uncle Rūpa lists sixty-four *bhakti* practices in his

Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu. Indeed, Rūpa deemed even this much more expansive list incomplete, referring his readership to the *Hari-*

Bhakti-Vilāsa 78 for even more extensive coverage of other ingredients of *bhakti*.

Worthy of mention from these sixty-four (in addition to the rst

three pertaining to the *guru*, which will be discussed later) are the last ve, since Rūpa speci es them as all-important (some, but not

all, of which correspond to the practices in the classical list of nine): Love for service to the lotus feet of the Deity;… relishing the meanings of the *Bhāgavata*;… association with *bhaktas* who have the same inclination as oneself;… singing the holy names;… and residing in the environment of [Kṛṣṇa's birthplace] Mathura … these

ve are so di cult to comprehend and possess incredible power,

that faith in them is hard to nd; but even a little connection with

them produces love, *bhāva*, in the pure mind. (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.225–38) Indeed, only passing comments have

been made by Jīva about residing in a holy place, for example, or

about pilgrimage. In this regard, in his *Upadeśāmṛta*, Rūpa states:

“Here is the essence of all instruction (*upadeśa*): one should pass all one’s time in this manner: residing in Vraj following those who are

devoted to Hari, 79 while increasingly engaging one’s mind and tongue in remembering and reciting the name, forms, and activities

of Kṛṣṇa” (8). Both the *Gosvāmīs* and Caitanya spent the rest of their days in holy places, the former in Vṛndāvana, the latter in

Jagannāth Pūri.

This might be the place to quote Rūpa’s list of the primary qualities favorable to devotion: “*Bhakti* is made successful by these six things: enthusiasm, con dence, patience, engaging in various

activities, rejection of mundane association, and following the

saints” (3). Additionally, while *vaidhī*, of course, nurtures *bhakti*, it seems relevant to note Rūpa’s identi cation in the *Upadeśāmṛta* of six activities that endanger it: “*Bhakti* is destroyed by these six things: excessive eating, over-endeavoring, idle chatter, not following *niyama* regulations, 80 association with worldly people, and avariciousness” (2).

By way of a conclusion to all this, the main point is that although

among these practices more importance is given to one over others

in one place, while a di erent practice is emphasized somewhere else, there is no contradiction, as these re ect di erent dispositions

and jurisdictions. They are to be understood in the same way as the

prescription of medicine [di erent remedies being pertinent to

di erent ailments]. (*anu* 310) Indeed, any one single practice, performed with pure devotion and unmixed intention, can bestow

the goal of *bhakti*: Kṛṣṇa *prema*, love of God. The purpose of all or any one of these practices is this and nothing else.

Bhakti Mixed with Attachment to *Dharma* and *Jñāna*

As a contrast to the higher stages of *bhakti* discussed next in *rāgānugā*, and to better highlight it, Jīva spends some time o ering observations about Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* that are mixed with motivations other than just pure devotion. He makes a distinction between devotionality free of any self-interest that is performed without any

ulterior motive other than to attain pure devotion (*akaitavā bhakti*)

—in other words solely to please *Kṛṣṇa*—and *bhakti* that is performed in order to gain some other type of personal bene t

(*sakaitavā bhakti*, *anu* 217).81 Needless to say: "Hari is pleased by pure *bhakti.* Anything else is just show" (VII.7.52). The *Bhāgavata*

sees even *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* practices as compromised—

while not denying their ability to bestow the respective fruits claimed by them, the realization of the *ātman*—since they are motivated by personal desire, albeit in the form of liberation. 82

Nonetheless, since almost all *bhakti* in any theistic tradition of the world is performed with some sort of personal self-interest at heart,

it is important to understand the mind-set associated with *sakaitavā*

bhakti, motivated devotion, so as to better contrast it with pure devotion, the *rāgānugā bhakti* of the next section, which is the ultimate goal of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

With a view to getting a better sense of the relationship between

action in the world and the speci c types of desires or self-interests

underpinning the performance of motivated *bhakti*, we will rst discuss the relationship between *bhakti* and *dharma*, then that between *bhakti* and *karma*. We remind the reader of our commitment, outlined in the "Introduction to the Volume," that our interest in this work is with the theology of *bhakti* and thus with *dharma* as related to the transcendental goal of that theology (Kṛṣṇa *prema*). Therefore, the attitude of the *Bhāgavata* to nondevotional *dharma* in the material world, a very important topic in its own right, lies beyond the scope of our focus. In this, we follow the *Gosvāmīs*, who show very little interest in their voluminous writings to issues pertaining to mundane *dharma*. So we will simply mention in passing that where it does touch on such things (for instance, in the eleventh canto), the *Bhāgavata* is an orthodox, socially conservative text upholding the conventions of the *varṇāśrama* (caste and stage-of-life) social order and gender dynamics in

accordance with the standard *dharma śāstras* of its time (such as

those of Manu).83

Bhakti* and *Dharma

The term *dharma* in social contexts refers to duty—the everyday obligations incumbent on any form of familial and civic life.84 There are, surely, duties inherited simply by dint of living in this world: in fact, people have multiple *dharmas*—professional, family related, gendered, cultural, stage of life, and so forth—so the term is context-speci c. In the idealized Vedic social system, there are four *varṇas*, professional occupations: *brāhmaṇa*, priestly/intellectual and religious specialist; *kṣatrīya*, warrior/administrator; *vaiśya*, merchant/landowner; and *śūdra*, employee of the other *varṇas*.

There are also four *aśramas*, progressive stages of life: *brahmacārya*, celibate student; *gṛhaṣṭha*, householder; *vanaprastha*, married renunciant retiree; and *saṅnyāsa*, solitary renunciant. In terms of profession, ideally—

as is explicit in the *Bhāgavata* and (arguably) implicit in the *Gītā*—occupational *dharma* re ects not the accident of birth, but the natural disposition of a person's psychophysical nature that lends itself most e ectively to a particular type of activity—teaching, statesmanship, business, craftsmanship, and so forth. 85 Since any expression of *dharma* re ects nothing other than this temporal *guṇa/karma* con guration of a particular body/mind mechanism in any one embodiment, a person's *dharma* completely

changes from one birth to another.86 *Dharmas* are thus temporal, as they pertain only to one particular birth; they are not ultimate or connected to the *ātman* per se.

In accordance with the *Gītā* (II.41–46), the *Bhāgavata* opposes the mind-set typically underpinning conventional *dharma* (although not necessarily the performance of the *dharma* itself)—namely, it criticizes the performance of *dharma* to ful ll sel sh and personal desires, such as those aimed at satisfying the body and mind. In fact, conventional *dharma* undertaken in the pursuit of material happiness is not the goal of human life for *yoga* in general, as it has nothing to do with the *ātman*, unless performed as *karma yoga* as in the *Gītā*,87 where it entails the sel ess performance of *dharma*, with no attachment to the results of the actions, or, in *bhakti yoga*, as an o ering to *Iśvara*.88 Indeed, like the *Gītā*, while the *Bhāgavata* certainly promotes the performance of mundane *dharma* in conventional contexts, 89 it is clear that this should be coupled with the pursuit of Truth for it to be meaningful from an ultimate point

of view. In fact, a good number (but by no means all) of its exemplars represented in this volume completely renounce *dharma*

at some point or, at least, again in accordance with the *Gītā*,90 are prepared to renounce it for their beloved Lord. This is exempli ed

most dramatically in the story of the simple cowherding *gopī*

women, as we will see, who are heralded as the greatest *yogīs* of all.

Irrespective of whether one remains active in the world or

chooses to renounce it, the ultimate *dharma* in the *Bhāgavata* is *bhakti* for *Īśvara*, which is eternal (that is, continues in the liberated state); everything else is no better than toil and tribulation: The highest *dharma* is that through which *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa [is born]. It is through this—performed without motive and uninterrupted—that the mind becomes completely satis ed.… If *dharma*, howsoever perfectly performed, does not produce attraction for the stories of Kṛṣṇa, then it is simply brute labor. (I.2.6–8) Here and elsewhere,

the *Bhāgavata* completely recon gures the meaning of the term *dharma*: "Whatever activity is dedicated to Me, the Supreme, without self-interest, even if it be useless and performed out of fear

or other such things, is *dharma*" (XI.21.29); and again: "It is this alone which has been handed down as the ultimate *dharma* for humankind in this world: *bhakti yoga* for *Bhagavān* by taking His name and other such devotional activities" (VI.3.22). The ultimate *dharma*, then, is to connect with *Īśvara* in devotion.

We need to touch brie y on Vedic ritualism. The regularized

performance of sacri ce, *yajña*, was also considered a *dharma* in ancient Vedic orthopraxy, as it was considered essential for

upholding the natural order of things. Vedic *yajña* was the mainstream form of religion on the sociocultural landscape at the time of the *Bhāgavata* (as also the *Gītā*), and, as we will suggest, it provided the same function as most forms of religiosity today. Vedic *yajña* was also a kind of *bhakti* to celestial beings, *devas*. But it was, in essence, ritualized business—rites performed with extraordinary

meticulousness and attention to protocol, but always in the

expectation of soliciting boons. 91 Items were o ered into the sacred re, *yajña*, to be transported to the *devas*, the demigods, whom we have been referring to as celestials (so as not to confuse them with

the manifestations of *Īśvara*),92 in return for material well-being—

typically, for the Vedic Āryans, cows, o spring, and victory in battle. It is this mercantile mentality associated with the ritualized

Vedic devotionalism of the day that is targeted by the *Bhāgavata*, as by the entire Yoga tradition in general, 93 as an inferior form of religiosity.

To understand the *Bhāgavata*'s critique of the lusty mind-set underpinning this ritualistic *dharma* from the perspective of our modern religious attitudes, we can equate Vedic ritualism with

materialistic religiosity in general in terms of the desires and expectations that motivate it. By materialistic religiosity, I intend the performance of any religious activity that, rather than seeking

ultimate transcendent Truth (whether knowledge of the self or

devotion to God), is performed for obtaining temporary bene ts for

the material body and mind by soliciting higher powers. Thus

whether these rituals involve lighting candles, o ering prayers,

ringing bells, performing prostrations or circumambulations, and

other such forms of worship—or, in the Vedic case, o ering

oblations into the sacred re—and whether that higher power is

conceived of in the form of the celestial recipients of Vedic ritualism

(*devas*), or in some notion of God, or angels, saints, *Boddhisattvas*, spirits, or any superhuman entity, the mind-set motivating those

activities is essentially the same: the soliciting of some boon.

Keeping this in mind, the following quote has perennial relevance:

The goal of the *dharma* which leads to liberation is not compatible with [that *dharma* performed for] the goal of material gain:94 the goal of the

dharma which is devoted to the One Supreme Being is

not taught in the sacred texts as the desire for material attainment.

In fact, the purpose of desire is not to ful ll the grati cation of the

senses, but to ful ll as much as is necessary to sustain life. And the

purpose of life in this world is inquiry into Truth, not to engage in

actions dedicated to *karma*, material gain.… Thus,… the ultimate perfection of *dharma*, performed diligently by people according to the divisions of the *varṇas* and *āśramas* (professions and life stages), is the satisfaction of Hari [Kṛṣṇa]. Therefore, *Bhagavān*, the Lord of the *Sātvatas* [Kṛṣṇa], should constantly be heard about, glori ed, meditated upon, and worshipped with a concentrated mind. (I.2.9– 14) Thus, as is typical of the *bhakti* traditions in general, while the *Bhāgavata* certainly does not undermine *dharma* related to the *varṇāśrama* caste system in terms of its social strati cations and work-related expectations in the real world of *prakṛti*, 95 it subverts it in the context of *bhakti*. Indeed: "A dog-eater whose life resources, endeavors, words, and thoughts are devoted to *Bhagavān* is better than a *brāhmaṇa* endowed with the twelve characteristics of the *brāhmaṇa* caste,96 who is averse to the lotus feet of Hari.… The former puri es his lineage; not so one who thinks himself to be important" (VII.9.1097). In the tenth book, the *brāhmaṇas* themselves lament their caste-induced spiritual myopia: "Curses on that birth which is threefold,98 curses on vows, curses on extensive learning, curses on our family lineage, and curses on skill in rituals, because we still remain averse to Kṛṣṇa" (X.23.40). And as a very important

aside, of relevance to the modern Indian context, it merits repeating

that the *Bhāgavata* explicitly states that caste (as in profession)

should be determined by one's innate nature, not by birthright (VII.2.31, 35). 99

Gender hierarchies, too, are subverted (but, importantly, only in

the context of *bhakti*),100 with the illiterate, forest-dwelling, simplehearted *gopī* cowherd women extolled as the greatest of all *yogīs*, simply by dint of their devotion: These *gopī* women are the highest embodied beings on the earth: their love for Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], the soul of everything, is perfected. Those who are fearful of the material world aspire to this, and so do the sages, and so do we ourselves.… *Aho!* May I become any of the shrubs, creepers, or plants in Vṛndāvana that enjoy the dust of the feet of these women.

They have renounced their own relatives, who are so hard to give

up, as well as the *Ārya* code of conduct, and worshipped the feet of Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa], the sought-for goal of the sacred texts of

revelation.… I pay eternal homage to the dust from the feet of the

women of Nanda's Vraj. (X.47.58–63) And further, in marked

contrast to the pure/impure concerns so central to Vedic

orthopraxy, even foreigners and those entirely outside the Vedic construct of *dharma* are eligible to practice *bhakti*: "By taking shelter of those devoted to Him, the tribes of the *kirātas*, *hūṇas*, *andhras*, *pulindas*, *pukkaśas*, *ābhīras*, *kaṅkas*, *yavanas*, *khasas*, etc., 101 as well as others who are sinful, become puri ed" (II.4.18), as do even animals (II.7.46).102 Indeed, one of the very earliest archaeological evidences for Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* is a metal column, constructed circa 100 B.C.E. by a Greek, Heliodorus, who refers to himself as a *bhāgavata*. (Western devotees of Kṛṣṇa may thus have a long antiquated predecessor!) *Bhakti*, then, is the ultimate *dharma* and hence the summum bonum and very goal of life, as the ve-year-old Prahlāda convinces his fellow students: A wise person should practice the *dharma* of *Bhagavān* from childhood. A human birth is rare, and even though it is temporary, it can bestow the goal of life. Therefore, a person in this world should approach the feet of Viṣṇu: He is one's *Īśvara*, the dearest friend, and beloved of all beings. (VII.6.1–2) The *Bhāgavata* urges us to appreciate this rarity and hence urgency of the human

opportunity and its potential: it is only in the human form, attained

after countless previous births, that one can attain liberation. This is not possible in the higher or lower realms, says Jīva, “because there

is complete immersion in sense enjoyment among those born as

celestials103 and an absence of discrimination (*viveka*) among animals” (*anu* 55). And what is to be lost from at least trying? “If a neophyte, after renouncing conventional *dharma* falls down [from the standards] while worshipping the lotus feet of Hari, what harm is there in that for him? On the other hand, what [ultimate] bene t

is attained for one following one’s conventional *dharma* but without worship?” (I.5.17). As Kṛṣṇa assures the hesitant Arjuna in the *Gītā*

with regard to *yoga* in general, the fallen *yogī* takes a celestial birth in the next life, then returns to this realm and picks up the practices

where he or she left o , “as if spontaneously” (VI.37–47). This simply means that the previous birth’s *saṁskāras*, latent memories, subconsciously reactivate in the mind, and one is automatically

reattracted to the path, seemingly without (or despite) conscious deliberation.

Bhakti* Mixed with *Karma* and *Jñāna

Continuing the theme of *bhakti* performed out of some personal motivation, let us further ne-tune our understanding of

conventional action in the world, but here with a focus on *karma*, action performed for the ful llment of desire (where the focus of *dharma* is more on the moral and dutiful dimension of action).

Karma is a theme to which Jīva frequently returns in his *Bhakti Sandarbha*, as, naturally, how to act in the world is of paramount concern to most, given that the vast majority of people do have desires that they pursue and are not inclined to renounce the world to become ascetics. This discussion overlaps considerably with the previous one on *dharma* and, indeed, the terms *karma*

and *dharma* are sometimes used synonymously. But they have been separated

since, whereas the focus in the previous section was on *dharma* as action—the nature of the acts themselves—we now consider action

in the world from the perspective of its motive: the desire for outcome.

The de nition of *karma* presented by Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* is “the creative force which gives rise to the desires of living beings” (III.8).

It is action in pursuit of ful lling desires. When the pursuit of these

desires is undertaken by means of actions performed in accordance

with the Vedic legal codes and injunctions, it is *dharma* and begets good fruits (VI.1.40). In classical times, the speci cs of what kinds

of actions constituted right *dharma* were outlined in a genre of texts, the *Dharma sūtras* or *Dharma śāstras* such as those of Manu.104 Thus action, *karma*, is to all intents and purposes more or less synonymous with *dharma* (social, professional, or familial duties), when these activities dedicated to the ful llment of desires are performed within the contours of Vedic norms and regulations.

When desires are pursued disregarding these codes, *karma*

becomes *adharma*, non- *dharma* (unrighteousness), and begets bad fruit. In both cases, *karma* is action prompted by desire and, as the *Yoga Sūtras* inform us, determines the *jāti*, future birth; *āyur*, future life span; and *bhoga*, future quality of life, good or bad, of the agent (II.13–14). These fruits or e ects are pleasurable or distressful— good or bad birth, long or compromised life span, and good or bad

quality of life and access to resources (and all their intervening shades)—depending on whether their initial causal actions fell into

the category of *dharma* or *adharma*. 105 The important point is that it is action prompted by desire that generates seeds of *karmic* reaction,

irrespective of whether *dharmic* or *adharmic*, and it is thus action that perpetuates reincarnation (as one must take future births, good or bad, to receive the fruits of such actions). These basic principles of the mechanisms underpinning reincarnation are shared by all the

mokṣa schools, including Buddhism and Jainism. But this leaves open the possibility of action performed free from desire, which does not plant seeds of reaction. As readers familiar with the *karma yoga* and *bhakti yoga* teachings of the *Gītā* will recognize, it is the mind-set underpinning the performance of action that is in question here—the yearning for material pro t, fame, or other such bene t:

in other words, desire—not necessarily the actions themselves. It is

action performed with desire that perpetuates *saṁsāra*. Action performed without desire does not breed reaction.

This seed of reaction, good as well as bad, can also be eradicated

when *karma* is o ered to Kṛṣṇa: “Whatever action you perform, whatever you eat, whatever sacri ces you perform, whatever you

give in charity, whatever austerities you undertake, do that as an o ering to Me, O Arjuna. In this way, you will be freed from the bondage of the fruits, whether auspicious or inauspicious” (*Gītā*, IX.27–28). In other words, acts of *karma*/ *dharma* may contain varying degrees of self-interest, but they are accepted as *bhakti* when o ered to *Īśvara*, and, importantly, this act of o ering them erases the very desires that spawned them, along with their reactions.

So in *bhakti yoga* routine duties need not be abandoned but can

become *bhakti* when o ered to *Īśvara*: “Whatever one does naturally with one’s body, words, mind, senses, intellect, or heart should all

be o ered to the supreme Nārāyaṇa” (XI.2.36; another theme

strongly emphasized in the *Gītā*, such as in IX.27). In fact, according to one verse, one can not only perform one's *dharma* in the world, but cultivate economic well-being and even satisfy desires while o ering these to *Īśvara* and cultivating the various practices associated with *bhakti*, at least until pure *bhakti* devoid of all personal desire is eventually attained: "A faithful person listening to, reciting and remembering the narrations about Me, which are auspicious and purify the worlds, and enacting My birth and deeds

[for example, in dance, poetry, art, drama, and the like], while pursuing [the conventional goals of life] *dharma*, *artha* (prosperity), and *kāma* (desire) for My sake after taking shelter of Me, attains unwavering *bhakti* for Me, the Eternal" (XI.11.23–24).

The idea here is that by dint of focusing the mind on *Īśvara*, any unwholesome desires underpinning one's actions are eventually

eradicated: "For those who worship Him, even though they do not

aspire for it, He bestows His own lotus feet, and these extinguish all

desire" (V.19.26). In this way, says Jīva, "even through o ering one's worldly activities one can somehow or other still attain

perfection" (*anu* 217). Put di erently, *karma* is removed by *karma*:

"That which causes disease for living beings, cannot [under normal

circumstances] be the remedy for that very disease. But it can cure

when used as medicine: the performance of all actions (*karma*), which are the causes of bondage for people, when performed for the

Supreme become capable of destroying themselves" (I.5.33–34). In

Kṛṣṇa's words, "The desire of those whose minds are absorbed in Me, does not produce desire" (X.22.26).

In point of fact, as we will see much more prominently in the case of Śiva, Kṛṣṇa, too (although much less stressed), is not averse

to ful lling the desires of His devotees on occasion, albeit with a higher goal in mind: “It is true that, when solicited, the Lord ful lls

that which has been requested by men; but He is not really

bestowing true bene t by this, as more requests are then again made” (V.19.26). Paraphrasing the *Gītā* (X.11), it is *Īśvara*, situated in the heart, who removes ignorance and desire: “All the desires in

the heart of a wise person who continuously worships Me through

the *bhakti yoga* I have imparted, are destroyed by Me situated in the heart” (XI.21.29); Patañjali’s *Īśvara-praṇidhāṇa* aspect of *kriyā yoga*, designated as that which removes the impurities, *kleśas*, such as

desire, and brings about *samādhi*, can also be read in this light (II.1–

2; II.45). 106 Therefore, the bottom line is: “Irrespective of whether one is free of desire, full of all desires, or desirous of liberation (*mokṣa*), if one is intelligent, one should intensely worship the Supreme Person through the practice of *bhakti yoga*” (II.3.10).

And more, even if one is addicted to unwholesome behavior,

adharma, one is still not excluded from performing *bhakti*. Jīva advises such people to o er even these unwholesome deeds to *Īśvara*

accompanied by the following prayer: “May the Lord who is full of

compassion bestow compassion upon seeing my su ering due to my

bad inclinations which are the cause of this su ering” (*anu* 217).

Thus, no one is denied access to *bhakti*: “If even the performer of the most evil deeds worships Me with undivided devotion, he will

quickly become righteous and is to be considered saintly, for his determination is perfect” (*Gītā* IX.30–31).

Nonetheless, Jīva notes, there is obviously a di erence between

genuinely o ering one’s *karma* for *Īśvara*’s satisfaction and o ering it incidentally as an afterthought. He notes that there might be three

motives in the o ering of one’s *karma*: the ful llment of one’s own material desire, to become free from the bondage of *karma*, or pure devotion to *Īśvara* (*anu* 224). In the rst two, says Jīva, the underlying motive is actually an aspiration to be free from su ering, and this is self-interest—any devotion to *Īśvara* is merely “a semblance.” The o erings are still e cacious, as has been noted, insofar as they eventually eradicate self-interest and desire, but only

the third type of motive, wherein only the satisfaction of *Īśvara* exists, is pure *bhakti*. An example of *bhakti* performed with personal desires is perhaps Dhruva, who will be encountered in his tale in part 3.107 The child prince performed astonishing *tapas*, austerity, while xing his mind on Viṣṇu, but his intention was gaining a kingdom greater than that of his father, who had o ended him.

Once Viṣṇu appears to him, he realizes the foolishness of this

aspiration: “Alas! Like a foolish person who, because of little merit, 108 requests cha ed rice from a sovereign, I, because of illusion, requested for my pride [to be upheld] from the Lord who

was o ering me His own personal abode.” (IV.9.35) In addition to

such “devotion mixed with personal sensual desires” (*sa-kāmā*

bhakti), Jīva discusses “devotion mixed with a desire for liberation” 109 (*kaivalya-kāmā bhakti*). This is a theme to which we will return frequently in the next section, as it expresses an important subtext of the *Bhāgavata*. This type of *bhakti* refers to those who devote themselves to *Īśvara*, but with the

intention of gaining *mokṣa*, liberation (also known as *kaivalya*)—that is, realization of the *ātman*, the goal associated with the path of *jñāna*.

The liberation-seeking type of *bhakta* uses a *bhakti* method for the purpose of realizing the *ātman* rather than engaging in *bhakti* out of love for *Īśvara*.110 In other words, the *yogī* here is worshipping *Īśvara* so as to be puri ed and in the hope that experience of the *ātman* will be bestowed by *Īśvara*. This type of practice resonates with the role of meditation on *Īśvara* in Patañjali's system, *Īśvara-praṇidhāna*, which results in *samādhi-siddhi* (II.45)—namely, "the immersion of the seer in its own pure essence" (I.3). The important point is that seeking the *ātman* through *bhakti* methods is not the goal of pure *bhakti*, as *Īśvara* is a higher Truth beyond the *ātman*, as we will discuss from a metaphysical perspective in "The Object of *Bhakti*."

Thus the practitioners of these two types of *bhakti* mixed with *karma* or *jñāna* seek goals other than pure devotion for *Bhagavān*. While neither of these is the pure unmotivated *bhakti* that we will encounter in *rāgānugā*, they are both nonetheless e cacious by dint of being connected with *Īśvara* on some level.

Finally, all of these compromised or "mixed" forms of practicing

bhakti can also be conceptualized according to the *guṇa* schema—

that is, di erent expressions of *bhakti* are also re ective of the di erent *guṇas* prominent in the mind of the *bhakta*: *Śrī Bhagavān*

said: "One who performs *bhakti* for Me full of anger, for the purpose of in icting violence, out of pride or envy, with a divisive mentality,

is in *tamas*. One who worships My Deity form for the purpose of sense indulgence, fame, or power, with a mentality that sees

di erence, is in *rajas*. One who [worships Me] for the purpose of becoming free from *karma*, as an o ering to the Supreme, or because worship is something that ought to be done, yet still

entertaining a mentality that sees di erence [from Me], is in *sattva*."

(XI.29.7–10) In sum, concluding all this using more familiar modern

frames of references, praying to God in any place through any mode

of worship for anything other than pure devotion—for one's daily sustenance, for help in a crisis, for victory in war or sport, for the

cure of a loved one—soliciting God for any material, emotional, social, cultural, political, humanitarian, or even soteriological

reason, is considered *bhakti* performed under the in uence of the *guṇas*. Obviously, appealing to God for humanitarian concerns toward the su ering of others is much higher (*sattva*) in the scheme of "mixed" *bhakti* than praying to God for one's own successes (*rajas*) or to assist one in harming an enemy (*tamas*). But pure *bhakti* has full faith in and surrender to *Īśvara*'s supreme will and omniscience in all things and thus does not presume to request for some petty tinkering of material a airs for temporary *prakṛtic* gain.

Indeed, as we noted, true *bhaktas* do not even request liberation, the goal of all other Indic soteriological (*mokṣa*) systems—even liberation of the personal sort, which maintains a postmortem

devotional relationship with *Bhagavān* in Vaikuṇṭha or Goloka, and thus is deemed acceptable to Vaiṣṇavas, unless service to their beloved Lord is its central feature: The characteristic of *bhakti yoga*, which is free of the *guṇas*, has been described as when the mind ows toward Me, who am seated in the heart, unimpeded, simply from hearing about My qualities, like the waters of the *Gaṅgā* river into the ocean. It is that *bhakti* to the Supreme Person, which is free

of motive, and uninterrupted. Such persons do not accept [the ve types of liberation]—residing in the same abode as Viṣṇu (*sālokya*); having the same opulence as Him (*sārṣṭi*); being close to Him (*sāmīpya*); having the same form as Him (*sārūpya*); and merging into Him (*ekatvam*)—even if they are o ered—without service to Me.

That type of *bhakti yoga* has been described as uninterrupted. By following it, one transcends the three *guṇas* and attains to My nature. (III.29.11–14) By way of a rather succinct yet apropos

conclusion to all this, and as a segue into the next section, there are

as many varieties of *bhakti* as there are *bhaktas* who practice it: “The path of *bhakti yoga* assumes many forms, my dear lady. It manifests variously, according to the permutations of the *guṇas* manifest in people’s nature” (XI.29.7).

Rāgānugā Bhakti

Vaidhī is clearly the *bhakti* performed by the vast majority of practitioners, but exceptionally advanced practitioners—which

generally entails those who have cultivated *vaidhī bhakti* for numerous preceding lifetimes111—may immediately experience an irrepressible attraction, *rāga*, toward Kṛṣṇa upon rst encountering narratives about Him. This is an attraction that appears spontaneous — *rāga-anugā*, “conforming to one’s [devotional] innate desire.”

Before proceeding, we must note that, where the previous discussion

on *vaidhī bhakti* contains the basic types of practices recognized and adopted by most schools or expressions of Hindu *bhakti*, even as each tradition tinkers with such practices uniquely and has its own

avorings and details, the following discussion on *rāgānugā* is speci c to the Kṛṣṇa theologies of the sixteenth century that

emerged with Caitanya and his contemporary Vallabha (in whose

tradition these practices are called the *puṣṭi mārga*). 112 Therefore, for reasons that will become clear, in order to understand *rāgānugā*

bhakti, we need to establish some theological infrastructure

pertaining to the nature of *mokṣa*, liberation, distinctive of Vaiṣṇava/ *Bhāgavata* theology in general. This involves Viṣṇu's divine realm, Vaikuṇṭha, as well as, more particularly still, Kṛṣṇa's

realm, Goloka.

The Divine *Brahman* Realms of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka

As we will discuss from a philosophical and theological perspective

in the chapter "The Object of *Bhakti*," *Īśvara* is an eternal Supreme Person in the Vaiṣṇava traditions, the *ātmans* are also not only eternal but eternally individual parts of *Īśvara*, and *bhakti* too between these individuals is eternal and not simply a means to some higher end. Where, then, does *bhakti* transpire between *Īśvara* and His *bhaktas* who have attained *mokṣa*, in the postmortem state? And in what manner does this take place, given that liberation entails becoming free from the *prakṛtic* body and mind? The answers to these questions are an essential trademark feature of Vaiṣṇavism, de ning and distinguishing its ultimate goals vis-à-vis other *yoga* systems. They are also indispensable to understanding *rāgānugā*

bhakti.

In *Bhāgavata* cosmology, or rather beyond it, in the trans- *prakṛtic* dimension of pure *Brahman*, there are innumerable divine realms called Vaikuṇṭha. These realms have nothing to do with the

temporary realms in *prakṛti* and so are not to be confounded with the celestial realms within *saṁsāra* (*svārga*), the abodes of the *devas*

—celestial beings or demigods—which are the destination of those

with requisite amounts of good *karma* (which, sooner or later, expires). They are eternal transcendent realms made not of the three

guṇas of *prakṛti*, discussed later, but of *Brahman* stu —namely, pure consciousness (*cit-śakti*). They are real, not *māyā*. These constitute the

eternal “Kingdom of God” in Vaiṣṇavism, the abodes of Viṣṇu and His devotees.

The *Bhāgavata* provides a few glimpses at the nature of Vaikuṇṭha. It is adorable to all the worlds (X.12.26); the highest realm where Viṣṇu, also known as Nārāyaṇa, resides (XII.24.14); the

highest region (IV.I2.26); beyond the world of darkness and *saṁsāra*

(the cycle of birth and death; IV.24.29, X.88.25); the destination of

those who have transcended the three *guṇas* (XI.25.22); and beyond which there is no higher place (II.2.18, 11.9.9). The peaceful

ascetics who reach that place never return (IV.9.29, X.88.25–26).

The residents of Vaikuṇṭha have “pure” forms, not material bodies

(VII.1.34). These forms are like that of Viṣṇu (III.5.14 .).113 One passage notes that Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa resides in Vaikuṇṭha with Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune, in palaces with crystal walls. The parks there shine like nal liberation itself, and contain wish-ful lling trees [that can ful ll any request made], which blossom all the year round. There are fragrant winds, and creepers dripping with honey

near bodies of water. Cries of exotic birds mingle with the humming

of bees, and magni cent owers bloom everywhere. Devotees of

Viṣṇu along with their beautiful wives travel in aerial vehicles made

of jewels, emeralds, and gold, but the beautiful smiling residents of

this realm cannot distract the minds of the opposite sex, since everyone is absorbed in Kṛṣṇa (III.15.14–25).

Again, all forms in Vaikuṇṭha are made of *Brahman* (*cit-śakti*), not of the ever-changing stu of *prakṛti*. And the Gauḍīya tradition holds that Śiva has his own transcendent realm as well, where he resides

with those who prefer to worship *Īśvara* in that form. 114

As a theological aside, a typical default response to the notion of

a personal Godhead with a divine abode possessing form and quality

is that any such imagining is an anthropomorphic construction—the

projection of qualities known to humans upon a transcendent

Godhead beyond all such qualities and mental constructions. But

from a Vaiṣṇava perspective, rather than Vaikuṇṭha being an

anthropomorphic projection, the reverse holds true: it is actually this world that is a "theopomorphic" projection. That is to say, there

can be forms and personages in our world only because they are temporary and *prakṛtic* re ections and imitations of the eternal *Brahman* protoforms. This world, as an e ect, must owe its dynamic personalized qualities and characteristics to its cause; so this cause, too, must have qualities. 115 "Man is made in the image of God" is a

coherent inference in personalist theology.116

In any event, according to the Kṛṣṇa branches of Vaiṣṇavism, 117

among the Vaikuṇṭha realms of Viṣṇu there is one speci c to Kṛṣṇa

called Goloka, the most supreme realm of all (the exact relationship

between Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu is discussed in the chapter "The Object of

Bhakti"). This transcendent abode of Kṛṣṇa is not described in detail in the tenth book, even though Kṛṣṇa reveals it to the *gopas* (X.28.14), but we are told that it is beyond darkness and is pure, eternal, unlimited, conscious, and e ulgent *Brahman* and that the *gopas*, cowherds-men, were overwhelmed with the highest ecstasy upon seeing it (X.28.14–17). 118 In fact, for the Gauḍīya tradition, the description of Kṛṣṇa's own transcendent

Brahman realm of Goloka corresponds to the descriptions of the landscape of Vraj in the *Bhāgavata*'s tenth book that we will encounter in part 3. Goloka is the divine protoversion of this or, more accurately, the Vraj depicted in the tenth book is a *prakṛtic* version of the true *Brahman* realm. In fact, Jīva outlines in the *Kṛṣṇa Sandarbha* that there are two manifestations of Vraj: the one visible to the senses and the one

perceivable only in deep states of *bhakti* meditation. The *prakṛtic* Vraj is thus a portal to the divine realm with which it coexists—

hence Rūpa's advice to aspiring *bhaktas* to reside there quoted earlier. Thus, despite such descriptive frugality in its source text, according to the Gauḍīya tradition, expanding, as always, on hints

in the *Bhāgavata* itself, when He descends within this world, Kṛṣṇa opens a window into the eternal *Brahman* realm of Goloka. The

stories in the tenth book that we will encounter in part 3 about Vraj, where Kṛṣṇa spent His childhood, and indeed, the very landscape with its ora and fauna, are actually, to again borrow some

phraseology, something akin to the Kingdom of God on Earth. Not

only does Kṛṣṇa descend, He brings His divine abode and even

certain associates from Goloka with Him. More than this, and

fundamental to understanding *rāgānugā bhakti*, the various relationships we will nd between Kṛṣṇa and His beloved associates

in Vraj replicate some of the relationships the liberated souls can have with Him for all eternity in the eternal realm within *Brahman*, Goloka.

In fact, the text suggests that Kṛṣṇa's incarnation has, in reality,

two motives: one is the "o cial" motive expressed in the

Mahābhārata (I.35–60) and the *Gītā* (IV.4 .), as also the *Bhāgavata* (X.1.15–22)—namely, to protect the righteous and free the earth

from the intolerable buildup of demoniac military power. But the one of interest to us in the context of *rāgānugā bhakti* is to attract the souls lost in *saṁsāra* to the possibility of eternal *līlā*, loving relational pastimes, with God in the transcendent eternal Goloka abode of Vraj, as revealed in the tenth book. These various relationships, discussed next, are deemed so attractive that even just

hearing about them enchants the listener away from his or her

attachments to the self-centered indulgences of this world of

saṁsāra, which simply perpetuate the cycle of *karma* and thus of repeated birth and death (XI.1.6–7, XII.3.14–15). *Samādhi*, in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, is nothing other than initially xing the mind in contemplating these *līlās* until, ultimately, consciousness is eligible to become absorbed in them directly, even while still embodied.

Just as *jñāna yoga*, the path of knowledge, involves xing the mind on the idea or notion of the *ātman* until consciousness is eligible to become reabsorbed in its own *ātman* nature experientially, *bhaktas* opt to x their minds on *līlās* until they become eligible to participate in them directly. They are not interested in the static passive state of self-awareness o ered by the *jñāna* paths and prescribed by Patañjali in the *Yoga Sūtras* (even as they acknowledge their factual availability), but seek spiritual reembodiment in a form made of pure *Brahman* and an active dynamic state of relationship with God. The mechanics and

metaphysics underpinning the di erences in both these practices

and their respective goals are discussed in “The Object of *Bhakti*”

and “Concluding Re ections.”

With all this as a necessary preliminary backdrop that will

become clearer as we proceed, in order to understand the workings

of *rāgānugā bhakti* we also still need to understand two further concepts more clearly: *līlā*, pastime, and the divine power that facilitates it, *yogamāyā*.

Līlā and *Yogamāyā*

In the *Bhāgavata*, the term *līlā* refers to pure play or spontaneous joyful pastime with intimate *bhaktas*.119 It is an exchange of love between God and devotee. The noun *līlā* is used frequently in the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata* when God is playing as a child with His friends in the beautiful idyllic forests of Vraj, where He spent His childhood, interacting with His beloved *bhaktas*—the *gopī* and *gopa* cowherding community—free of any sense of mission or purpose, other than to engage in *līlā*. The term is never used in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa is portrayed as God playing the role of a teacher imparting spiritual knowledge to Arjuna. But in the Vraj section of

the tenth book, we are granted a vision of God at play, God

reciprocating playful, loving exchanges with His most intimate

bhaktas.

Indeed, a number of the usages of the noun *līlā* in the tenth book suggest that Kṛṣṇa has assumed a body for the sake of *līlā*120 (in contrast with the *jīvas*, the souls in the world, who are helplessly injected into bodies as a result of their *karma*, propelled along by forces beyond their control). Of course, the *Bhāgavata* resonates with the discussion of the Vedāntins in insisting that God is *aptarāma*, self-satis ed, and requires nothing. So His decision to engage in *līlā*, then, points to a spontaneous expression of His blissful nature, not to some lack.121 But most of all, it is an expression of His love for His *bhaktas*, for whom He makes himself amenable so that they can love Him through di erent roles and relationships according to their devotional desires (*rāga*). All this will become clearer as we discuss the speci cs of these

relationships.

Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* completely enchants the residents of Vraj, who have earned by the purity of their unshakable *bhakti* over numerous lives this privilege of having their unique personal relationship with Him

as friend, parent, or lover (X.8.52). *Līlā* is how Kṛṣṇa and His *bhaktas* express their blissful and spontaneous reciprocation of love according to the devotees' *bhāva*, mood (discussed below).

Understandably, the great fortune of the residents of Vraj who were

able to engage so intimately with Kṛṣṇa in His *līlā* is stressed prominently throughout the text: to be an intimate associate of God

is the highest possible perfection of human existence in the

Bhāgavata (X.47.58). The ecstatic states of love exhibited by Kṛṣṇa's associates in Vraj are not paralleled by other paradigmatic devotees

anywhere else in the entire *Bhāgavata*.

A corollary concept essential to understanding *līlā* is *yogamāyā,* the power of "divine illusion." This nominal compound appears, at

rst glance, to be an oxymoron. We know in Hindu thought in

general that the term *yoga* has positive valences denoting that which connects the *yogī* with the innermost *ātman* (and, in the case of *bhakti yoga*, with *Īśvara*, the Supreme *Ātman*). But we also know that the term *māyā* has negative ones, as that which does precisely the opposite by preventing the practitioner from realizing his or her own *ātman* and also from recognizing *Īśvara*, the *Paramātman*. *Yoga* is the set of practices that redirects the awareness of *ātman* back to its original pure *Brahman* source (*Yoga Sūtras* I.3), where *māyā* does precisely the contrary; it is the power that prevents the *ātman* from realizing both its nature as pure eternal consciousness and the presence of *Īśvara*. *Māyā* diverts consciousness instead into identifying with the instrumentation of the external bodily and psychic coverings and then outward into the things of this world as

objects of desire. 122 *Māyā* is the illusory power that keeps the *ātman* bewildered by the sense objects of this world and consequently

ensnared in *saṁsāra*, 123 while *yoga* is the means to free the *ātman* from these. How then can the oxymoron *yogamāyā* be rendered coherent?

As with her *saṁsāric māyā* counterpart, *Yogamāyā* indeed deludes the pure liberated souls participating in the *līlā* with her power of concealment so that they do not perceive Kṛṣṇa as Supreme

Godhead. But, like *bhakti yoga*, she does this so that the souls can connect with *Īśvara* intimately by perceiving Him, rather, as their friend, lover, or child (etc.) instead. Otherwise, if souls realized Kṛṣṇa's true nature as Supreme *Īśvara*, they would consequently be incapable of interacting with Him in *līlā* in these intimate modes because they would be overwhelmed by His majesty and supremacy.

Hence the term preserves the valence of illusion, but an illusion that

manifests only at the highest stage of *bhakti*. Unlike that of her *saṁsāric* alter ego , *Yogamāyā*'s power of illusion is a highly coveted one experienced only by the most quali ed *yogīs.* Although even great *ṛṣis* (sages) are anxious to *avoid* the illusory power of the conventional *māyā*, the greatest sage of all, Nārada, by contrast, is very eager to *experience* the power of the divine *yogamāyā*

(X.69.19 .). While the regular *māyā* can *disappear* only by devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the divine *yogamāyā* can *appear* only by devotion to Kṛṣṇa (X.69.38). Just as entrance to the mundane world of *saṁsāra,* an

undesirable state of a airs, depends on the pure knowledge of the *jīva* being enveloped by the in uence of the *saṁsāric māyā*, entrance into the transcendent world of *līlā,* a desirable state of a airs, depends on the pure knowledge of the *jīva* being enveloped by the in uence of the divine *yogamāyā*.

Kṛṣṇa relishes these personal informal associations far more than

the conventional formal worship in awe and reverence that results

from the awareness of His position as Lord and Creator of

everything. Kṛṣṇa doesn't want to be exclusively *Īśvara*—God on high, so to speak—He also wants to enjoy *līlā* with His friends as an equal or with His parents as a subordinate: "For those who could understand, *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa manifested the condition of [submitting] himself to the control of His dependents in this world"

(X.11.9). But how could God truly play spontaneously and

unceremoniously with anyone in the role of a son or friend, if everyone knew He was really God? It is *Yogamāyā* who ensures, with her illusory but divine devotional spell, that the *ātmans* in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* remain unaware of Kṛṣṇa's real nature.124 Indeed, even Kṛṣṇa himself becomes so involved in His *līlā* that He sometimes also seems to prefer to forget His own supremacy.125

The *Bhāgavata* vividly illustrates *yogamāyā*'s essential role in the world of *līlā* when, as we will see in part 3, Kṛṣṇa's foster mother, Yaśodā, looks into her son's mouth to see if He has eaten dirt but

sees the entire universe there instead (X.8.36). Becoming

enlightened as to the real nature of both herself and Kṛṣṇa, she nds

that her ability to interact with Him as His mother is immediately

shattered and, instead, she begins to bow down at His feet, spouting

lofty Vedāntic rhetoric and eulogizing Him as the Supreme Being (X.8.40 .). Kṛṣṇa immediately deludes her with His *yogamāyā,*

erasing her memory of the event so that she can again place Him on

her lap, nurse Him, and continue with her maternal duties in pure

love, thinking of Him as her adorable infant dependent on her

care.126 This divine illusion, of course, is appropriate for the perfected souls who have attained God in these ways by their past-life *vaidhī bhakti*, but we, the audience (or, nowadays, reader), are constantly reminded of who Kṛṣṇa is: “Do not consider that Kṛṣṇa is His father’s o spring; He is the *Īśvara* or all *ātmans*, the Supreme imperishable Being. But He has concealed His majesty in the form of

a human being by His *māyā* power” (XI.5.49).127

Being subject to the in uence of *yogamāyā*, and hence able to play such intimate roles in God’s *līlā*, then, is the highest and most rare boon of human existence. The *Bhāgavata* repeatedly states that not even the celestials, or most elevated personalities, or even Viṣṇu’s eternal consort, the Goddess of Fortune herself, enjoy the grace bestowed on the residents of Vraj (X.9.20). Kṛṣṇa’s foster mother, Yaśodā, was able to chase Kṛṣṇa in anger, to spank Him whom the greatest *yogīs* of all cannot reach even in their minds (X.9.9). So elevated are the residents of Vraj that Kṛṣṇa Himself becomes subservient to their love, “like a wooden puppet …

controlled by them” (X.11.7). They are able to engage in these unique modes with Kṛṣṇa, whom *yogīs* cannot reach even after many births of austere disciplines (X.12.12). All this is possible by the power of *Yogamāyā*. Without her, there could be no *līlā* and, hence, no intimate, nonmajestic relationship of love with *Īśvara*. And without such relationships, there could be no *rāgānugā bhakti*.

Rāga, Bhāva, and *Rasa*

Connecting all this with our present purposes of understanding

rāgānugā bhakti, when Kṛṣṇa’s associates absorb themselves in their particular *līlās* with their Lord under the spell of *yogamāyā*, these relationships are expressions of their speci c *rāga*, devotional desire, and *bhāva*, loving mood. *Rāga* and *bhāva* are two out of three terms that overlap and are central to understanding the spontaneous *bhakti* to which we will now turn our attention in this section, the

other term being *rasa*. With regard to *rāga*, we will also need to di erentiate *rāgānugā bhakti* from the protomodels upon which it is based: *rāgātmikā bhakti*.

Rāga, desire, is one of the ve *kleśas*, obstacles to Yoga, which must be overcome in almost all Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain *mokṣa* traditions in order to realize the *ātman* (see, for instance, *Yoga Sūtras* II.4–7).[128] It stems from *avidyā*, ignorance, de ned in the *Yoga Sūtras* as considering oneself to be the temporal, impure, su ering-prone body and mind, rather than the eternal pure blissful *ātman* (II.5). *Rāga* is de ned as *sukha-anuśayī*, the pursuit of material pleasure (II.7). The *Nyāya Sūtras* identi es its synonym *icchā* as that which prompts actions (III.2.305), and the *Gītā* gives yet another synonym, *kāma*, as contemplation of and attachment to sense objects (*viṣaya* II.62). All these terms denote the motivational trigger that prompts action aimed at ful lling some material need or want.

Jīva de nes *rāga* similarly, as the "innate overwhelming desire to contact a sense object (*viṣaya*) by one who is attracted to that sense object" (*anu* 310), and Rūpa as "being completely and innately absorbed in the object of desire" (II.272). In all such *yogic* contexts, desire is directed toward the satisfaction of the body/mind self due to ignorance of the true self, and hence it generates *karma*, which is the cause of bondage, *saṁsāra*. In other words, desires underpin actions, and all actions, whether good or bad, when performed in ignorance of the true *ātman* self, generate corresponding reactions, and so one has to take rebirth to experience these reactions, good or bad. Desires are insatiable, says the *Mahābhārata*, and "there has never been, nor will there ever be anyone born in this world who

has been able to satisfy them" (*Mokṣadharma* 177.22); hence desires are "fetters" to this world (*Mokṣadharma* 251.7). Indeed, the *Gītā*

considers mundane desire "the all-consuming enemy in this world,

impelling one to impious deeds" (III.36–37).

However, when *Īśvara* is established as the object (*viṣaya*) and desires are channeled toward Him, everything changes, even as such

desires are likewise also called *rāga*. The obvious di erence is that self-centered desires seeking to gratify the body and mind with the

sense objects of *prakṛti* end up perpetuating su ering and *saṁsāra*, the cycle of birth and death, instead. 129 Attraction for Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, eradicates mundane desires and attachments and

ultimately leads to bliss and liberation (*Gītā* IX.34). 130 As Kṛṣṇa Himself puts it: “The desire of those whose minds are absorbed in

Me, does not produce desire, just as grain which is cooked or fried is

not generally capable of sprouting” (X.22.26). Even in the stoic *Yoga Sūtras*, dedication to *Īśvara* removes obstacles such as mundane *rāga* (II.1–2) and causes liberation (II.45).

Nonetheless, the underlying psychological principles of *rāga*, whether stemming from ignorance (the *kleśa* s) or of the *bhakti* variety, are identical. Let us consider this with more focus: in conventional Yoga psychology, *rāga* is initiated by the senses encountering an object that produces a pleasant experience. This experience becomes recorded as an imprint (*saṁskāra*) on the mind (*citta*), as all experiences do, which can then emerge at a later time as a pleasant memory. This memory can be caused either from reencountering that same (or a similar) object, which triggers the memory, or just from idle daydreaming, when one sieves through

one’s reservoir of *saṁskāras*, patching *saṁskāras* together in fantasy and reverie. Desire is nothing other than contemplation on this memory with a wish to re-create the experience of which it is an imprint. As outlined in the *Gītā* (II.62–63), if the memory is entertained long enough, it develops into desire, which in turn morphs into an impulse for action—to reexperience or reacquire that sense object. This is the psychological (or, actually,

metaphysical131) underpinning of desire and its variants, such as greed and lust, in Yoga.

So, for example, let us suppose that one samples chocolate for the rst time, and as a result of this experience the tongue registers a

pleasant sensation of taste as a *saṁskāra* in the *citta*. Now, when one happens by the chocolate store some other day and the eyes

encounter the chocolate display in the window, one's memory of the

previous taste of chocolate is activated—in this case, a pleasant recollection. 132 That previously existing *saṁskāra* becomes classi ed as *rāga* when it causes one to wish or decide to reattain the experience underpinning it—that is, to obtain some chocolate on another occasion. So the longer one gazes through the window, the

stronger is the likelihood of desire—the impulse to reattain that experience or taste—developing and growing. And aversion works

in exactly the same way: the senses encounter an object that creates

an unpleasant experience, and this is also recorded as memory. On

reencountering that object in some future time (or simply in one's

anxious imaginings), one strives to avoid or eliminate it. Fear, anxiety, hatred, anger, and other such mental states are variants of

dveṣa.

Kṛṣṇa too is a sense object, 133 whether encountered through the narratives of the *Bhāgavata*, as in our case—that is, by means of the sense of hearing via the ears through *śravaṇa*, the rst process of *bhakti* (or, if reading the text, via the eyes)—or whether encountered personally during His incarnation (through the eyes, ears, and all the senses in the case of the residents of Vraj). The *Bhāgavata* holds that howsoever encountered, Kṛṣṇa leaves an impression on the mind, which, like any other sensual imprint,

remains as a memory. Unless the mind is consumed by an inordinate

degree of *tamas* or *rajas* (see discussion in "Meditation in Hate and Lust"), this memory can be enchanting and keep resurfacing,

prompting the devotee to continually reseek the experience of Kṛṣṇa

through some of the processes of *bhakti* we have discussed— *śravaṇa*,

kīrtana, *smaraṇa*, and so on. This is the psychological mechanics of *bhakti yoga*.

In fact, this dual applicability of the term *rāga* is just a *bhakti* variant of the binary distinctions between the *kliṣṭa-akliṣṭa vṛttis* (detrimental and nondetrimental states of mind) in Patañjali (I.5) or

of the mind's potential to be either the friend or the enemy of the

yogī in the *Gītā* (VI.6). Any *yoga* practice takes place in the mind.

When the mind is used in ignorance of the true self (*Yoga Sūtras* II.4 .) and dedicated to the pursuit of bodily and mental desire in

the realm of *prakṛti*, rather than the quest for the *ātman* or *Īśvara*, it is detrimental, an obstacle, an enemy, because it is ignorance that

perpetuates frustration, unful llment, *karma*, and hence *saṁsāra*.

But when the functions of the same mind—the *vṛttis* of Patañjali, the object of its thought in the *Gītā*, or, in the present context, its *rāgas*

—are directed to the goals of *yoga* of any stripe, the mind is transformed into a *yogic* one: "The wise say that this mind is the cause both of lower experience under the in uence of the *guṇas*, as well as of higher existence, liberation, the state beyond the in uence of the *guṇas*. If the mind is in uenced by the *guṇas*, it leads the living beings to calamity. If it transcends the *guṇas*, it leads to liberation" (V.11.7–8). In other words, love of God, wisdom, discrimination, knowledge, enlightenment, and all or any other such *yogic* attainments refer to nothing other than states of the mind when the mind is manifesting its higher potentials—they are not states of *ātman* in the metaphysics of the *Bhāgavata*.

So, likewise, in the context of *bhakti*; when *rāga* is devotional—

that is to say, when the mind is manifesting and channeling feelings

of desire and love directed toward Kṛṣṇa, the ensuing state of mind

is called *rāgānugā* (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.272). 134

We can note that this is one major di erence between classical *yoga*

and *bhakti*: in generic *yoga* one essentially strives to suppress all states of mind completely (*citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*, *Yoga Sūtras* I.2) and

weaken their underlying impulses such as *rāga* (*kleśa-tanū-karaṇa* II.2). In *bhakti*, devotees have no interest in *nirodhaḥ*, suppressing the mind; *bhaktas* endeavor to fully activate the mind's states and impulses such as *rāga* but to channel them exclusively and entirely toward *Īśvara*.

As touched upon above, these feelings toward *Īśvara* take di erent forms: "I [Kṛṣṇa] am their intimate soul, the son, friend, teacher, well-wisher, and beloved Deity" (III.25.38). 135 Simply put, when Kṛṣṇa incarnates, He does so in a familial and social context, as we will see later from the tales of the tenth book. He is thus a son

or brother to someone, a husband to someone else again, a friend to

others, and so on. And *rāga* in the devotional context is a speci c *bhakta*'s spontaneous desire to be Kṛṣṇa's servant or, for another, to be His friend or, for someone else again, to be His parent or lover,

the intense attraction underpinning that speci c relational mood. It

is a desire for Kṛṣṇa molded into the speci cs of a relationship unique to the *bhakta*.

Where *rāga* is a speci c type of desire, *bhāva* is the mind-set that accommodates it—the mood, thoughts, feelings, and associations

nurtured by that desire. A *bhāva* is natural, says Jīva, and unique to each individual "as a distinctive *bhāva* that re ects a *bhakta*'s sense of self" in terms of his or her unique personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa (*anu* 310). 136 These relationships will be discussed in the next section, but one's *bhāva* can be to consider oneself Kṛṣṇa's parent or friend or lover—to experience

the convictions and emotions associated with this sense of self vis-à-vis Kṛṣṇa. It is an unbreakable conviction that Kṛṣṇa is one's very own intimate child, friend, and

the like.

Bhāva is the rst state of *prema*, which is a more intense level of love of God, the ultimate stage of *bhakti* itself: "When this *bhāva* takes on a very intense nature and is characterized by a sense of

'my-ness'137 [a feeling of Kṛṣṇa belonging to onself], this stage is

called *prema* by the wise" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant IV.1). This sense of "my-ness" re ects the unbreakable bond the *bhakta* has established with Kṛṣṇa. It is free of all the self-centered motives that we have discussed as "mixed" *bhakti* and hence wins over Viṣṇu (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant IV.13). Just as the last three limbs (*aṅgas*) of Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅga* (eight-limbed) *yoga*

—*dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*—are simply deepening degrees on the same spectrum of concentrative focus (III.1–3), so *prema* is a more intense form of *bhāva*. According to Rūpa, "The progression in the manifestation of *prema*, love of God, for those engaging in *bhakti* is: rst faith; then the association of saints; then acts of devotion; then the cessation of all obstacles; 138 then becoming xed in practice; then *bhāva*; 139 then detachment; and then nally *prema* manifests" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant IV.15–16).

Additionally, although *bhāva* and *prema* appear in the mind—

permeating it as re permeates a metal bar—they are divine powers

that are distinct from the mind (as re is distinct from the bar) according to Gauḍīya theology. They are, in fact, bestowed by Kṛṣṇa

as a gift from His own personal nature of pure bliss to His devoted

bhaktas. 140 They are bestowed either as a result of devotional practice, *vaidhī bhakti* (*sādhana*), which is how they are most commonly attained, or, more rarely, for those who are fortunate, simply by the grace of the already perfected *bhaktas* or of Kṛṣṇa. 141

Already at the state of *bhāva,* the preliminary ecstatic symptoms of love in the form of tears and goose bumps begin to manifest, 142 and by the stage of *prema* a person's behavior is unpredictable and hard to comprehend; 143 we have seen in the example of Caitanya the degree of divine madness and the extremeness of the ecstatic bodily symptoms that the highest states of *prema* can wreak on the *bhakta*.

The reader will, at this point, perhaps be gaining some sense of

the richness of the Gauḍīya analysis of the various stages and ingredients of love of God, which are excavated in far greater detail

in the technical literature of the tradition, but we still do not yet have all the ingredients in hand to understand *rāgānugā bhakti*. We must brie y touch upon *rasa*—anyone interested in pursuing further advanced study in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* will soon encounter the term (and it is the central term in the title of Rūpa's work *Bhakti-rasa-amṛta-sindhu*, *Ocean of the Nectar of the Experience of Bhakti*). 144 Rūpa describes *rasa* as follows: "When love for Kṛṣṇa has become a xed state of mind, it becomes *bhakti rasa*. By hearing the stories of Kṛṣṇa, it generates a relishable taste in the heart of the *bhaktas*"

(II.1.5). *Rasa* is the "taste" or actual experience of love itself. In other words, while all these terms overlap considerably, and are interdependent and coexistent, *rāga* is the speci c desire to relate to Kṛṣṇa in a particular way, *bhāva* is the corresponding mind-set that accommodates and nurtures it, and *rasa* is the speci c devotional taste or actual ecstatic experience of love in the heart that ensues from these. There are ve primary *rasas* ensuing from what the tradition identi es as the ve principal personal relationships a *bhakta* can have with God. 145 From these we have already encountered *dāsya*, servitorship, and *sakhya*, friendship, as the seventh and eighth of the nine processes of *vaidhī bhakti*. Now we will nd them incorporated as the

second and third of these ve major *rasas*, the modes of interaction the *bhakta* can have with Kṛṣṇa.

The rst of the ve *rasas* discussed by Rūpa is *śānta*, peaceful.

Here, the *bhakta* is attracted to "the form of *Īśvara*" but not to active participation in the *līlās* enjoyed in the other *rasas* discussed next (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant I.6). There is no *yogamāyā*

here, *śānta rasa* stems from awareness that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme *Ātman* (*Parama-ātman*), so there is no sense of the "my-ness" found in the more intimate *rasas* that are devoid of any awareness of God's majesty, and there is no attitude that one is intimately bound to Kṛṣṇa through an active relationship. In other words, one nds one's complete existential ful llment beholding the majesty of God, rather than thinking of God as "my son," "my friend," and so forth. Rūpa

adds that "it is similar to the happiness found in the *ātman* by the *yogīs*, except that the happiness of the *ātman* is incomplete, and the happiness that is connected with *Iśvara* is complete.… Therefore, when the two eyes behold Kṛṣṇa's form, the minds of the great enlightened sages abandon the path of the impersonal *Brahman* [synonymous with *ātman*]" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant 1.5–8). So while this is a passive form of devotion, where the *bhakta* is fully content in the bliss of beholding a vision of the personal Godhead, it is nonetheless an experience that far surpasses the bliss of absorption in one's *ātman*, which is sometimes referred to as an experience of impersonal *Brahman* (as we will discuss in "The Object of *Bhakti*").

Rūpa makes another interesting comment here pertaining to one

category of *yogī* cultivating *bhakti* through this *śānta bhāva*: "There are ascetics who are completely immersed in renunciation with an

unshakable desire for liberation, and who perform worship to *Īśvara*, thinking: 'Liberation is attained without di culty through *bhakti*'"

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant I.15). In other words, for this category of *yogī*, *bhakti* is performed functionally in the motivated manner Jīva described as “devotion mixed with the desire

for liberation”146—namely, to attain an experience of *ātman*/ *Brahman* rather than to achieve unmotivated love of *Īśvara* or experience a relationship with Him. In other words, *Īśvara* is approached as a benefactor, but for an alternative goal, realization of one’s *ātman*, not for the real goal of *rāgānugā bhakti*, which, as we know, is prema—love for *Īśvara* and nothing else, not even liberation itself. We will discuss this further, but here we can recall

the role of *Īśvara* in the *Yoga Sūtras*: *samādhi siddhiḥ*, to bestow *samādhi* (experience of the *ātman*, II.45), and perhaps Rūpa, too, has this in mind. Nonetheless, even such *ātman*-seeking *yogīs* may be in for a surprise, as Kṛṣṇa Himself notes: “When I am obtained by a *yogī* who is in the state of *samādhi* (*ātman* absorption)147 their bodies tremble [in ecstasy] by My *līlā*” (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant I.36). Along the same lines, Rūpa notes that “when the great occasion of Hari’s *līlā* was sung by Nārada on his *vīṇā* stringed instrument, trembling occurred in the body of sage Sanaka, even though Sanaka had attained absorption in *Brahman*”

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Southern Quadrant V.19). This, according to another such *yogī* he quotes, is because “the intensity of that bliss that appeared in *samādhi* after all ignorance had been completely destroyed increased a millionfold when Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the Yādavas, personally appeared to me”148 (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant 1.37). In comparison with this *Īśvara*- related bliss, “the long time spent in the bliss of the *ātman* seemed useless”

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant 1.34). After seeing Kṛṣṇa’s form, “the mind does not relish the inner *ātman* as it did before”

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant I.40). In fact, “after discarding the experience of liberation … [the] mind longs to see the higher aspect of *Brahman* (*para-Brahman*,149 beyond the *ātman*), which is that adorable Kṛṣṇa, who is as beautiful as a dark rain-cloud” (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Southern Quadrant V.20). Ultimately, “for Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, it is this vision of

God that is the true goal of the eight-limbed *yoga*" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant 1.39); in comparison with this, the experience of the *ātman* pales into insigni cance (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant I.40).

We have dwelled at some length on the *śānta rasa*, as the reader

will soon become well aware that one of the main subthemes of the

Bhāgavata is this diminution of the goal of classical *yoga*, the experience of one's *ātman* (*mokṣa*/ *mukti*/ *kaivalya*/ *nirvāṇa*150),

namely, consciousness absorbed in its own nature, 151 in comparison with the bliss of any type of personal encounter, relationship, with

Kṛṣṇa. The remaining four *rasas* express such personal relationships,

each one consecutively increasing the level of bliss experienced by the *bhakta* immersed in that *rasa*.

The second *rasa* is *dāsya*, which we know from its occurrence as the seventh of the nine processes of *bhakti* is experienced by "those who identify themselves as the servants of Kṛṣṇa"

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant II.5). What distinguishes this relationship vis-à-vis the three *rasas* that will follow is

"knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's supreme majesty" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*

Western Quadrant II.16). *Yogamāyā* is less present here. But *dāsya*, in turn, di ers from the previous rst *rasa* in that *dāsya* is an active relationship rather than the passive one of *śānta*. The de ning characteristic of *dāsya bhaktas* is that they consider themselves to be incredibly favored by Kṛṣṇa but nonetheless to be His inferiors (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Southern Quadrant V.27). Rūpa identi es various categories of servants, from which, again in keeping with this main subtheme, we can mention those who formerly followed the path of *jñāna*, knowledge, seeking the experience of the *ātman*, but "renounced *mokṣa* after hearing about your sweetness from the

saints” (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant II.22). The servants are encountered in the selections in part 3 from the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata* exhibiting their devotion as Kṛṣṇa’s attendants and personal servants, fully content with the ecstasy they experience from this relationship.

The third *rasa* is *sakhya*, friendship (again, these sequential positionings of Kṛṣṇa’s *rasas* re ect the increasing intensity of *rasa*, love, experienced by the *bhakta*). Rūpa de nes it as “the a ection that exists between two people who are more or less equals; its nature is one of trust and an absence of respectful deference”

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant III.105). This intimate sense of equality characterizes this *rasa*, contrasting it with the *rasa* of *dāsya*, where inferiority is felt by the *bhaktas* owing to awareness of Kṛṣṇa’s majesty. *Sakhya* manifests in such things as laughing and joking (Southern Quadrant V.30). So here, as with the following two *rasas*, Kṛṣṇa conceals His majesty (through *yogamāyā*) and in this *rasa* assumes the role of an equal for those who choose to relate to Him in this way. In all of this, God, out of love, reciprocates with and conforms to the speci c nature of the *bhaktas*’ love for Him.

As with all the *rasas*, there are various subcategories of friendship

—including that of Arjuna from the *Bhagavad Gītā*. From these varieties, the Vraj friends are preeminent: “The friends in Vraj, who

always roam about with Kṛṣṇa and are miserable if they do not see

Him even for a split second, devote their lives to Him alone.

Therefore, they are considered the best among Kṛṣṇa’s friends”

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant III.16). Arjuna’s friendship, while certainly intimate, is comparatively more formal and

deferential, as can be gauged from the *Gītā* and *Mahābhārata.* We will encounter the *sakhya bhakti* of these most intimate of friends in Vraj in part 3.

The fourth *rasa* is *vātsalya*, parental. Since in this *rasa* Kṛṣṇa submits to accepting protection and support from His *bhaktas* who are in the roles of His parents or senior guardians and well-wishers,

here, too, His majesty is even more concealed (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*

Western Quadrant IV.5). Rūpa de nes *vātsalya* as “that love, devoid of all awe and reverence, directed to Kṛṣṇa as one who needs

sustenance

by

someone

who

provides

sustenance”

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant IV.52). Those who

experience this *bhāva*, in addition to Kṛṣṇa’s actual parents and foster parents, are the elderly cowherd-women and -men of Vraj as

well as certain sages (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant IV.10–

11). As we will see in part 3, under the in uence of *yogamāyā*, those in this *rasa* are fully convinced that Kṛṣṇa is dependent on their protection and support for His well-being, and it is this phenomenon

of guardianship that characterizes *vātsalya*.

Finally, exhibiting the most intense expression of love, the fth *rasa*, *madhura*, amorous, is also the most easily misunderstood. Rūpa de nes it as “the pleasure exchanged between Kṛṣṇa and the fawn-eyed women” (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Southern Quadrant V.36). The two major expressions of *madhura* are romantic love in separation from the beloved and love in

union (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant V.24). The tradition considers the love-stricken behaviors

and maddened ramblings of the *gopīs* when their beloved disappears from their midst, examples of love in separation (*virāha bhakti*), to be a more heightened state of ecstatic love than when Kṛṣṇa appears

and satis es their amorous desires. The *gopī* chapters from part 3

portray some sense of the avor of these modalities of *madhura*. And from all those whose love for Kṛṣṇa is expressed through this *rasa*,

"the most excellent of Hari's beloveds is Rādhāraṇi, the daughter of

King Vṛṣabhānu" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant V.7).

Although Rūpa acknowledges that the expressions of *madhura* are

vast, and in fact dedicates a separate treatise, the *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*, to this *rasa*, his treatment of it in the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* is curt. This is "because of its intimate nature, because it is di cult to

comprehend, and because it is of no interest to those who are renounced [that is, who seek the *ātman*]" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Western Quadrant V.2). In terms of this last comment, Jīva'

elaborates152 that the *jñānīs* (*ātman*- seeking *yogīs*) who confound this *rasa* with mundane romance are uninterested in it, even though it is connected with *Bhagavān.* The roots of this di erence in understanding between the Vaiṣṇavas and certain *ātman*-seeking *jñāna* traditions will become clearer in the chapter "The Object of *Bhakti*," which examines how *Īśvara* is conceived in the various traditions.

The misunderstanding of *madhura* in fact prevailed into the colonial era, but for di erent reasons, and it was to a great extent

this aspect of the Kṛṣṇa tradition that caused the Kṛṣṇa of the

Bhāgavata Purāṇa to be severely impugned and jettisoned in favor of the seemingly more righteous Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in both colonial and Hindu apologetic neo-Vedantin moral discourses.153 But of course *madhura* is divine love and has nothing to do with mundane eroticism (indeed, Rūpa, Jīva, and all the *Gosvāmīs* were celibate and highly orthodox renunciants).

Given the extensive nature of the subject and the parameters of

our focus, we can do no more than brie y note here that almost all

Kṛṣṇa worship in India is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship, at least in the north,

even as Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort in Gauḍīya theology, is not

explicitly mentioned in the *Bhāgavata*. This worship is an enormously important feature absolutely central to the highest

stages of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. Rather than attempting an inadequate or cursory treatment of this most intimate form of love of God, we follow Jīva and Rūpa's example in not covering this in a preliminary

treatise on *bhakti* and in advising the reader to engage this topic in subsequent reading (for example, see Rūpa's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*).154

Rāgātmikā Bhakti

Jīva next introduces yet another related and overlapping concept indispensable for our purposes: *rāgātmikā*, the last ingredient we must discuss in order to understand *rāgānugā*, since *rāgānugā* is modeled on *rāgātmikā*. When the *bhāvas* and *rasas* discussed previously are exhibited by Kṛṣṇa's eternal family and associates in the divine Goloka (Kṛṣṇa's eternal *Brahman* abode beyond *prakṛti*), they are called *rāgātmikā bhakti*. *Rāgātmikā* means that the very nature of the spiritual mind155 (*ātmika*) expresses a particular *rāga* for Kṛṣṇa; this *rāga* does not need to be cultivated through practice, as we will see is the case with *rāgānugā*; it is inherent. In other words, it is the speci c *rāga* for Kṛṣṇa eternally present in His liberated associates living in Goloka. As we know, this *rāga* produces

and sustains the corresponding natural *bhāva*, mood, such as friendship or parenthood, re ecting every *rāgātmika bhakta*'s unique, constant, and natural relationship with Kṛṣṇa. It is spontaneous and

completely independent of rules and prescriptions (*vaidhī*) and thus, being natural, is not considered a practice (*sādhana*). 156 In Rūpa's words, "That form of *bhakti* when *rāga* is utterly absorbed naturally in the beloved is called *rāgātmikā*" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.272).

Rāgātmikā is also found in those *bhaktas* eligible to take their last birth in *prakṛti* prior to their attaining the eternal *Brahman* Goloka, which they do during Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as part of His entourage. 157

These *rāgātmikas* then participate in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* when He incarnates.

We should always keep in mind, when we read the Vṛndāvana

(Vraj) section from the tenth book in part 3 of this volume, that the

rustic illiterate cowherd folks among whom Kṛṣṇa appears during

His incarnation did not just randomly end up being born by chance

at the right time and place. They are all *rāgātmika bhaktas*. His simplehearted mother, Yaśodā, His hardworking father, Nanda, His

boisterous youthful *gopa* (male cowherd) companions and enamored

gopīs (female cowherds)158 are all highly accomplished *rāgātmikas* from previous lives: "What did Kṛṣṇa's father, Nanda, do to obtain

such great fortune? And what did the greatly fortunate Yaśodā do,

that Hari drank from her breast?" (X.8.46). What Nanda and Yaśodā

in fact did in their previous lives in order to obtain the fortune of

having Kṛṣṇa as their son, according to the *Bhāgavata*, was to devote themselves to intensely austere practices of *vaidhī bhakti*, including

enduring extremes of temperature and subsisting only on leaves and

air (X.3.2–8). It is as a result of this that “Nanda is the most fortunate person in the world of men; the sages who purify the worlds visit [his] house, because the Supreme *Brāhman* Himself, disguised by the characteristics of a human being, resides there”

(VII.10.48). The cowherd boys who had the opportunity to roam

about with Kṛṣṇa had “accumulated an abundance of merit”

(X.12.11), and the *Bhāgavata* cannot even describe the penance that must have been performed previously by the queens of Dvārakā who

were able to massage the feet of Kṛṣṇa as their spouse (X.90.27).

It is through remarkable previous-life *vaidhī yoga* practices that some *bhaktas* become eligible to take birth during Kṛṣṇa’s incarnation, and the fruit of this previous practice is that their *rāga* at this point manifests spontaneously; “it is perfected” and arises “like the waves of the *Gaṅgā*” (*anu* 310). They too have attained the stage of *rāgātmikā bhakti*. Like the already eternally liberated souls in the *Brahman* realm of Goloka, those who are born in intimate proximity to Kṛṣṇa during His descent into the world also no longer need to perform practice, *sādhana*, and follow the rules of *vaidhī*, because their devotion has already attained the *sādhya*, the perfected goal of *sādhana*. Hence *rāgātmikā*—as well as *rāgānugā*, which conforms to it—does not come under the heading of *vaidhī*

bhakti. But how speci cally does *rāgānugā bhakti* di er from *rāgātmikā bhakti*?

The Development of *Rāgānugā Bhakti*

We now have all the pieces in place required to understand *rāgānugā*

bhakti. *Rāgānugā* begins after a *bhakta*’s mind has been su ciently puri ed of the *kleśas* (mental impurities, such as material desire) by the practice of *vaidhī bhakti*. At this point, he or she begins to develop a preliminary

attraction for one of these *rāgas* exhibited by the *rāgātmika bhaktas* encountered in the narratives in part 3 from the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata*. It is the prequel to becoming a *rāgātmika* oneself, but a stage when the *bhakta* has not yet attained the eternally inherent, perfected, and exclusive love of the actual *rāgātmikas* in Goloka. It is an initial spontaneous attraction conforming to a particular *rāga*, but one that has not yet developed into the intense, all-consuming, uncontrollable love of the *rāgātmikas*. Let us quote Jīva directly here before discussing this

further, as, unlike the nine processes of *bhakti*, this level of *bhakti* is inferred from, but not explicitly articulated in, the *Bhāgavata* itself: Now *rāgānugā* will be discussed. When an attraction for a speci c type of *rāga* as discussed previously has arisen, but not the actual speci c *rāga* itself, the mind becomes like a crystal, re ecting the rays of the moon of that *rāga*. By hearing from the sacred texts and teachers, an attraction arises for the behavior of that *rāgātmika* who has that same *rāga*. That attraction seeking that same *rāga* that manifests in the practitioner is *rāgānugā*. (*anu* 310) *Rāga-anuga* literally means "conforming to" or "following" a *rāga*. As the crystal can "conform" or re ect the moon's rays, and so capture some of its rays, even though not containing the actual moon, so a *bhakta* accomplished in *vaidhī bhakti* begins to re ect the mood of the chosen *rāgātmika* to whom he or she is attracted, even as his or her own *rāga* in that mood is still preliminary and not yet fully developed. In Rūpa's words, "When devotion models itself on the *rāgātmikā bhakti* that radiates visibly through the residents of Vraj, it is known as *rāgānugā*" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* II.270).

Rāgānugā thus is a preliminary stage where a particular *rāga*, a particular yearning to relate to Kṛṣṇa in a speci c *bhāva*, mood—as a child, friend, lover, and so forth—has begun to stir in the heart of

the *bhakta* that has been puri ed by *vaidhī bhakti*. What Jīva intends by "modeling itself on the *rāgātmika*" is that this fascination or stirring draws the *bhakta* to further and more deeply study and increasingly restudy the speci c narratives associated with that particular *rāga*—that is, the relevant narratives in the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata* and its derivative literatures that feature the *rāgātmikas* who exhibit that *rāga*. The aspiring *bhaktas*' thoughts and moods start to conform to those of the favorite *rāgātmikas* in

the narrative. These *rāgātmikas* thus become the exemplars that the *rāgānugā bhaktas* seek to emulate. 159

So, for example, if one is intrigued by and drawn to Kṛṣṇa as a young boy in the mood of the *sakhya bhāva* of friendship, one will especially relish those speci c narratives where Kṛṣṇa goes to the forest with His companions of the same age, frolicking and playing games, such as those we will nd in the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa with the cowherd boys in part 3. One never gets tired of reading these sections of the narrative but nds oneself becoming more and more

enchanted with each reading and wondering about this or that

detail. Now, within such narratives, the friends of Kṛṣṇa, who

already have the full-blown eternal love for Kṛṣṇa in that *sakhya rāga*, are the *rāgātmikas*. They are *rāgātmikas* because their *rāga* is their very nature (*ātmika*). It is inherent, not something that needs to be further cultivated, as is the case with the *rāgānugās*. So they serve as the role models for the *rāgānugās*, the readers160 who are beginning to experience a spontaneous attraction to these particular episodes and to feel an inclination to mold their own *bhāva* on these exemplars.

This principle is fairly standard even in conventional behavior: if

one wishes to become, say, a popular singer, one will likely spend

much time imitating and copying the songs of others who “have

made it” in the particular style of music to which one is drawn and

seek every detail about the life and behaviors of one’s idols that one

can possibly glean, before one develops one’s own identity in that

genre. So with *rāgānugā*: Those are eligible for *rāgānugā* who are eager to attain the *bhāva* of those residents of Vraj who are xed exclusively in *rāgātmikā*. The sign of the emergence of that desire is that, when hearing the sweetness of that *bhāva*, the intelligence has no regard for the

[prescriptions of] sacred texts or logic. However, one [whose devotion has not yet manifested su ciently and hence

who is more appropriately] eligible for *vaidhī bhakti* should follow the prescriptions of the sacred texts and also engage the type of logic that is favorable [to *bhakti*] until the *bhāva* manifests.

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.291–93) *Vaidhī bhakti* is weak compared with *rāgānugā*, says Jīva, as it is based on the prescriptions of the sacred texts, where *rāgānugā* is independent of rules and irresistible. Scriptural injunctions, says Jīva, are intended only for those who do not have natural attraction for *bhakti*.

Prescriptions and regulations are there so as to at least somehow or

other initiate some form of practice by training the mind in a way

that gradually leads to it becoming absorbed in devotion; otherwise

it is overwhelmed by the material disturbances (*kleśas*) endemic in embodied life. But they are not required for one who actually has

bhāva, because such a person will naturally and spontaneously be absorbed in thoughts of the Beloved, irrespective of theological scriptural pronouncements and prescriptions: “Sages who are

situated in the state beyond the *guṇas*, have desisted from rules and regulations and relish the qualities and stories of Hari” (II.1.7). In

fact, we know that such spontaneous and irrepressible love

transcends consideration or awareness of even who Kṛṣṇa is in the

grand scheme of things: “Whether one knows or does not know who

I am, or the nature or extent of My Being, if one worships Me with

undivided *bhakti*, I consider that person to be the best of all *bhaktas*”

(XI.11.33).

However, Jīva preemptively quickly adds that this type of

spontaneous devotion is very rare, and if one imagines oneself out

of conceit (or, worse, nefarious motives) to have attained this as an

excuse for disregarding scriptural injunctions, then one is simply deluding oneself and others out of foolish pride. Indeed, to minimize

the possibility of being exploited by charlatans posing as *rāgānugā*

bhaktas so as to transgress moral social norms or befool the public, Jīva recommends real *rāgānugā bhaktas* to nonetheless combine their spontaneous unrestrained devotion with *vaidhī* prescriptions and

practices so as to set an example for others, even if they themselves have transcended the need for *vaidhī* (*anu* 132).

We are reminded here of a parallel situation in the *Gītā*, but there in the context of following duty and social prescriptions (*dharma*).

Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that even though it is true that “for a person who

delights in the *ātman*, is satis ed in the *ātman*, and is content in the *ātman*, there is no *dharma*,” by the same token, even as “there is no gain to be had from performing work, there is also no gain to be had

from not performing work” (IX.17–18). Therefore, he recommends

that Arjuna “should perform work to uphold the social order … as

whatever acts a great person does, people will follow” (IX.20–21).

Even He Himself acts, says Kṛṣṇa, despite being the supreme

unrestrained Lord, otherwise people would try to imitate His

example (IX.22–23). Very relevant here, too, is Patañjali's

(unusually) emphatic assertion that there are absolutely no

exceptions to the following of the *yama* moral obligations, predicated on neither birth, time, place, nor circumstance of any sort (such as level of spiritual attainment).161 Thus, any aspiring *yogī*

approaching a *guru* gure who claims to have transcended the need for moral codes in the name of some higher esoteric spirituality should know that such claims are not in line with the classical *yoga*, Vedānta, *jñāna*, Vaiṣṇava , Śaivite, or *Bhāgavata* traditions (or, indeed, any Indic tradition, including Buddhism, Jainism, and right-

handed Tantra162).

To conclude this section, then, the prescriptions of the sacred texts, including those of *vaidhī bhakti*, are designed to train the mind of the aspiring *bhakta* toward an increasing absorption on Kṛṣṇa—

speci cally, on His names, forms, qualities, and pastimes. When

Kṛṣṇa sees the sincerity of the practitioner, He cleanses the mind of

all impurities—such as the *kleśas*, ignorance, ego, *rāga* for sensual indulgences, and so on (*Yoga Sūtras* II.3 .). As the mind becomes pure, it loses its *rāgas* for the sense objects of *prakṛti* and begins to replace these with the beginnings of a particular *rāga* for Kṛṣṇa. This *rāga* can take various forms—an attraction to Kṛṣṇa as a master, child, friend, or lover, the ve *bhāvas*, or *rasas*. As this *rāga* deepens, one becomes drawn to the liberated *rāgātmika bhaktas* who spontaneously embody this particular *rāga* with their entire being in their intimate interactions with Kṛṣṇa during His *līlās*. One encounters such *rāgātmikas* within the texts that record and depict them—with the *Bhāgavata's* tenth book as canonical and paramount in this regard. Through study and instruction on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, one strives to enter deeper and deeper into the *bhāva*, mood, of this role model *rāgātmika*, spontaneously modeling

(“conforming,” *anuga*) one’s own thoughts upon his or hers. This practice is natural rather than prescribed (and therefore, in a sense,

if not arti cial, somewhat forced), as is the case with *vaidhī*. This is *rāgānugā bhakti*, the goal of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* as a *yoga* process prior to liberation, but the penultimate goal of *bhakti* itself. The ultimate grand-nale stage is to oneself attain a role as a *rāgātmika* in Kṛṣṇa’s divine *Brahman* realm of Goloka (or as a *rāgātmika bhakta* during Kṛṣṇa’s next incarnation in *prakṛti*, and then, after that last birth, continuing that *rāgātmikā bhakti* for all eternity in Goloka). For this, as will be discussed further, one is endowed with a divine *Brahman* body and mind bestowed by Kṛṣṇa upon shedding the *prakṛtic* body

(for example, see I.6.28 and IV.12.29) that can facilitate that requisite *bhāva*.

Pertinent to all this, in *Bhāgavata* theology, it is the *bhakta* who chooses the *bhāva* toward *Īśvara* corresponding to his or her desire and preferences. There is free will here.163 In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa states that “in whatever way people resort to Me, I reciprocate in that way” (IV.11). As always, the *Bhāgavata* is a bit more expansive and visual in exemplifying this: Kṛṣṇa went to the arena with his elder brother. He was perceived by the wrestlers as a lightning bolt; by

men as the best of men; by the women as Kāma (Cupid) personi ed;

by the *gopas* as their relative; by the unrighteous rulers of the earth as the chastiser; by His mother and father as a child; by Kaṁsa, the

king of the Bhojas, as death; by the ignorant as the manifest universe; by the *yogīs* as the Supreme Truth; and by the Vṛṣṇi clan as the Supreme Divinity. (X.43.14) While ultimately *bhāva* is bestowed by Kṛṣṇa (Eastern Quadrant III.4), it re ects the free will of the *bhakta*. For those who have attained the stage of *rāgānugā*, Kṛṣṇa is just as keen to reciprocate and serve His *bhaktas* as they are to o er their loving service to Him. Love involves reciprocal submission and service between individuals: it cannot be unidirectional. As we will

see in the *līlā* stories in part 3, even though supremely independent, and even though He is *svarati*, one whose pleasure is self-contained and needs no external stimulus (X.33.23), Kṛṣṇa relishes submitting

to His beloved devotees: “The quality of submission to His devotee

was demonstrated by Hari, despite the fact that He is only

constrained by His own free will” (X.919). “He becomes subservient

to His servants such as the Pāṇḍavas, acting as friend, messenger, and guard,” says Jīva (*anu* 327).

Meditation in Hate and Lust

Those familiar with the *Yoga Sūtras* will recall that *rāga*, desire, the third of the ve *kleśas*, obstacles to *yoga*, has a ip side: *dveṣa*, aversion, the fourth *kleśa* (II.3–8). Indeed, the mechanisms underpinning these two *kleśas* are identical. In the *Bhakti Sandarbha*, Jīva discusses an interesting counterpart to being spontaneously absorbed in adoring thoughts of Kṛṣṇa’s attractive qualities: one can

obsessively despise Him and still attain liberation. The *Bhāgavata* makes a point of stressing that one does not even need to be favorably devoted to Kṛṣṇa, as long as the mind is intent upon Him.

In other words, *dveṣa* can be directed toward Kṛṣṇa, just as *rāga* can.

Our discussion on this is followed by point of contrast with some further comments on *rāga* directed toward Kṛṣṇa, but in this case

rāga that stems from sensual lust for personal sexual grati cation.

And this, in turn, is compared with the *rāgānugā* of the *gopīs* touched upon above.

Meditating in Enmity: Kṛṣṇa and the Demons

The *Bhāgavata* highlights in numerous narratives that even adversaries and demons (*asuras*) out to kill Kṛṣṇa attain liberation, simply by dint of their minds being absorbed in Him, albeit in psychopathic hatred: “Even [the demoness] Pūtanā, in the guise of a good person, attained You, O God” (X.14.35, X.6.35). Since she was

a devourer of infants who attempted to murder Kṛṣṇa, “it is

astonishing that the wicked Pūtanā attained the destination of

Kṛṣṇa’s mothers, even though she o ered Kṛṣṇa her breast smeared

with poison desiring to kill Him. Who else is more merciful than He?” (III.2.23). We will see in part 3 that when the serpent demon

Agha was killed, “an amazing great light rose up from the thick coils

of the snake, illuminating the ten directions with its splendor. It waited in the sky for the Lord to emerge, and then entered into Him

before the very eyes of the residents of the celestial realms”

(X.12.33). This type of liberation[164] is attained by all the demons such as Śiśupāla (X.74.45) and Dantavakra (X.78.9–10), who “could

not tolerate Kṛṣṇa from the time they began babbling as babies!”

Kṛṣṇa’s mortal enemy Pauṇḍraka, like the demon king Kaṁsa, had

his bondage destroyed “through his unceasing meditation on

Bhagavān.” He was awarded liberation, because “even Kṛṣṇa’s sworn enemies attain the highest destination” (X.66.24, X.87.23). [165]

King Yudhiṣṭhira asks Nārada how all this can possibly be so—

how, rather than being cast into hell, can Kṛṣṇa’s murderous

enemies attain a destination even the saintly *jñāna yogīs* who seek their *ātman* do not achieve? The sage replies that Kṛṣṇa cannot be touched by anger. Anger, as Patañjali tells us, stems from ignorance

of the true self (*Yoga Sūtras* II.12)—that is, from misidentifying with

the temporal *prakṛtic* coverings of body and mind. Clearly *Īśvara*, the Supreme *Ātman*, is not subject to ignorance. 166 Therefore, everything *Īśvara* does is for the ultimate welfare of His creation and not out of the *kleśas*—ignorance and its by-products, such as anger and revenge (*dveṣa*). Demons (*asuras*) too are nothing other than *ātmans* temporarily covered by inordinately dense *tamas* and *rajas* due to past misdeeds. But beneath those layers they are also *Īśvara*'s *aṁśas* (parts) and eligible to burn up their a icted *karma* and attain liberation like any other embodied being. And anyone, friend or foe, coming in contact with Kṛṣṇa becomes puri ed.

But for our purposes of understanding the mechanics of *bhakti* as a *yoga* process, from a *samādhi* point of view, Kṛṣṇa's enemies may have been unconventionally devoted—devoted to killing Kṛṣṇa—but

this is still a mental absorption so intense that it was nonetheless a

type of undeviating concentration on *Īśvara*. Patañjali de nes *samādhi* as "when only the object of meditation shines forth alone, and [the mind] is devoid of its own [re ective nature]" (III.3). Put

di erently, when one is not aware of anything other than the object

of meditation in conventional *samādhi*, then that object constitutes one's universe. 167 Consider, in this light, Kṛṣṇa's archenemy:

"Whether sitting, resting, eating, or moving about the land, Kaṁsa

thought of Kṛṣṇa. He saw the whole universe pervaded by Kṛṣṇa"

(X.1.24). For the *Bhāgavata*, this quali es as an expression of *samādhi*—after all, in order to attain *samādhi*, Patañjali allows that one can x the mind on anything, *yathābhimatā-dhyānād vā* (I.39), as long as it is undeviating.

In fact, says sage Nārada, these adversaries' fear and hatred may sometimes translate into an even deeper state of *samādhi* than that of the pious *bhaktas*: "Just as an insect, trapped in a pot by a wasp, and thinking of him in anger and

fear, attains the same form as the wasp [in the next life]."168

Of course, Jīva (and Rūpa) hasten to note that despite the

liberation awarded to Kṛṣṇa's adversaries, their type of meditation is

not considered part of the *Bhāgavata dharma*. Obviously *bhakti yoga* promotes a loving intentionality as that underpinning the mind's absorption in *Īśvara*. And needless to say, if those inimical to Kṛṣṇa are involuntarily liberated just by coming into contact with Him, irrespective of their motives, then "what to speak of those who o er something of highest value to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul, with faith

and devotion like His mothers did?!" (X.6.36). Put more elaborately:

"[The adversarial] kings, thinking in enmity of Kṛṣṇa's gait,

appearance, and eye movements, while sleeping, sitting, and

engaging in other acts, had their minds molded by Him, and so attained oneness with Him—what then to speak of169 those whose minds are full of love for Him?!" (XI.5.48).

The following passage sums up the psychological principles

involved here: One should x one's mind on Govinda [Kṛṣṇa] and

not think of anything else, whether out of enmity, friendship,

goodwill, fear, a ection, or lust.… [His] enemies had their sins cleansed from thinking of Kṛṣṇa, who is *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, and has taken the form of a human through his *māyā* potency. Many have

attained His abode after becoming freed from sin and absorbing

their mind in *Īśvara* out of desire, enmity, fear, a ection, or *bhakti*: the *gopīs* out of desire, Kaṁsa out of fear, the king of the Cedis out of enmity, the Vṛṣṇi clan out of friendship, you [Pāṇḍavas] through

friendship, and we [Nārada and others] through *bhakti*." (VII.1.25–

30) Anything coming into contact with *Īśvara* even mentally becomes puri ed, just as anyone contacting electricity becomes

electri ed, irrespective of who that person is or what his or her motive might be: "Kṛṣṇa bestows the devotional path [to one who

even] once internalizes a mental image of Kṛṣṇa's body" (X.12.39);

"By meditating on, hearing, and reciting Your name, by worshipping

and remembering you, even a dog-eater from anywhere is made t

to perform the *soma* ritual pressing; 170 what then to speak of one who has had a direct vision of You, O *Bhagavān*?" (III.33.17). As

Kṛṣṇa is supreme purity, nothing in contact with Him can remain impure.

Meditating in Passion: Kṛṣṇa and the *Gopīs*

Jīva then proceeds to engage the very same principles in considering

the amorous desire that the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa's adoring cowherd maidens, directed toward their beloved (*anu* 320), which we will encounter in their narrative in part 3. Isn't their attitude a *rāga*, the ip side of *dveṣa*, enmity/aversion from Patañjali's ve *kleśas*, obstacles to *yoga*? The *gopīs' rāga* is rather di erent from the *dveṣa* of Kṛṣṇa's adversaries, as, in Jīva's opinion, unlike the latter, they had no self-interest in their undeviating absorption on Kṛṣṇa, even as they are attracted to Kṛṣṇa as a gorgeous male. We will return to the *gopīs* in a moment. Perhaps the ointment maker Kubjā, who unabashedly

solicits Kṛṣṇa when the latter enters the capital city, Mathurā, is a

better counterexample of the *dveṣa*, aversion, phenomenon of Kṛṣṇa's enemies, as her intentions are clearly lusty and geared toward her own sensual impulse: "Kubjā pulled the end of Kṛṣṇa's

outer garment and spoke to Him smiling. Kāma (Cupid) had

awakened in her heart: 'Come, hero, I am unable to leave you here

—let us go home! You are the best of men; oblige a woman whose

mind has been aroused by You!'" (X.42.9–10). Kṛṣṇa obliges because

of her simple act of devotion in o ering Him her choicest perfumes.

Thus, while her intentions were not sel ess as Jīva considers those

of the *gopīs* to be, nonetheless, because Kubjā's *rāga* was directed toward *Īśvara*, rather than some object of *prakṛti*, she attained the highest goal of life, and in this represents the ip side of the *dveṣa* principles of Kṛṣṇa's adversaries outlined above.

The *rāga* of the *gopīs*, in contrast, is heralded in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* as the highest, purest expression of simple and unre ned, sel ess love.

While it was love re ected through an amorous or conjugal *bhāva*, it was centered on abandoning all personal considerations for Kṛṣṇa's

satisfaction: "We gently place Your tender lotus feet on our rough breasts with trepidation. You wander in the forest on them and our

minds are disturbed: What if they have been hurt by small stones?

Your Lordship is our life" (I.31.19). Kṛṣṇa Himself appears stumped

by the purity of their love: "You have broken the enduring shackles

of the household, and have served Me. You are full of goodness and

without fault, and I am unable to reciprocate.… Therefore, let your

reward be your own excellence" (X.32.22). Love for anything other

than *Īśvara* simply "shackles" one to the institutions of *saṁsāra* such as the household, where love for Kṛṣṇa liberates one and entitles one to attain the divine realm of Vaikuṇṭha/Goloka. And of all those

who love Kṛṣṇa, the illiterate simpleminded *gopīs* are deemed the topmost *bhaktas* in the *Bhāgavata*.

One passage is worth quoting at length in this regard for the insights it expresses with regard to the unsurpassed *bhāva* of these female *rāgātmikās*: When Uddhava saw how moved the *gopīs* were in their preoccupation with Kṛṣṇa, he was extremely pleased. Paying homage to them, he spoke as follows: "These *gopī* women are the highest embodied beings on the earth: their love for Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], the soul of everything, is perfected. Those who are fearful

of the material world aspire to this, and so do the sages, as do we

ourselves. What is the use of births as Brahmā [the highest celestial

being], for one who has a taste for the in nite stories [of Kṛṣṇa]? On

the one hand, these women are forest dwellers tainted by deviant behaviors, yet, on the other, they have developed a love for Kṛṣṇa,

the soul of everything. Truly, the Lord personally bestows blessings

on the person who worships Him even if that person is not

learned.… He bestowed His favor on the beloved women of Vraj,

who were accorded the honor of having their necks embraced by his

long arms. Such favor was not bestowed on the most loving Śrī, the

Goddess of Fortune, who [resides] on His chest, nor on the celestial

women, who have the beauty and the scent of lotuses—not to

mention other women. *Aho!* May I become any of the shrubs, creepers, or plants in Vṛndāvana that enjoy the dust of the feet of

these women. They have renounced their own relatives, which are

so hard to give up, as well as the Āryan code of conduct,[171] and worshipped the feet of Mukunda [Kṛṇṣa], the sought-for goal of the

sacred texts of revelation." (X.47.58–61) And once again, let us not

forget, when we contemplate who it is that takes birth as a female

who gets to experience intimate association with Kṛṣṇa, that "how

can one describe the penance [they must have performed in

previous lives]?" (X.90.27). Jīva quotes the *Kūrma Purāṇa* here:

"The sons of Agni [in a previous life], great souls, attained a female

form [as *gopīs*] through great austerity (*tapas*), and thereby Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vāsudeva, the unborn, all-pervading source of the

universe, as their husband."[172] In fact, the text presents the *gopīs* as the most accomplished beings in the entire universe. [173] It is essential to note that the *rāga* one develops toward Kṛṣṇa has nothing to do with one's temporary gendered embodiment in any particular birth: it transcends the sexual orientations of any temporal body or mind-set, which changes from birth to birth. Males too can be drawn to an

amorous physical *rāga* toward Kṛṣṇa. Rūpa quotes a verse in the *Padma Purāṇa* similar to the reference in the *Kūrma Purāṇa* noted above, but here about other sages in the Daṇḍaka forest from a previous age mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who became enamored with Rāma, a previous incarnation, and so in a subsequent birth they too took birth in Vṛndāvana as *gopīs*.[174]

This brings us to the topic of our next section. How does one become a *bhakta* of one sort or another to begin with? We have seen some of the various permutations that *bhakti yoga* can take—what

are some of the characteristics of the various categories of *bhakta*?

The Practitioner of *Bhakti*, the *Bhakta*

The First Step in *Bhakti*: Association with a *Bhakta*

We now turn our attention to the *bhakta* as the performer of *bhakti*.

One of the rst questions Jīva raises in this regard in the *Bhakti Sandarbha* is: How does one become a *bhakta*? Put di erently, if a *bhakta* is one who performs *bhakti yoga* out of devotion for *Īśvara*, then how is the initial devotional attraction, *rāga*, to *Īśvara* prompting a *yogī* to initially take up the path of *bhakti* developed in the rst place? While, as we know, this *rāga* toward *Īśvara* is the cause of liberation and has nothing to do with the mundane attachments to the temporal personages or objects of *prakṛti*, it is still a *rāga*—a *saṁskāra*, or "mental imprint," of something pleasing to the mind. Thus, although we are dealing with a unique sort of *rāga*, the psychological metaphysics and mechanisms are the same: whether mundane or devotional, *saṁskāras* do not self-manifest; they enter into the *citta* from external sense impressions, and *bhakti* is no di erent. So from where do the very rst external impressions originate to then enter the mind to eventually form *saṁskāras* of *rāga* for *Īśvara*?

Jīva notes that some souls are already born with the *saṁskāras* of *bhakti* that were cultivated in a past life (see *Gītā* VI.37–47 for an exposition on this and the Tale of King Bharata in part 2 for a narrative example). These *saṁskāras* are triggered in the subsequent life when coming in contact with a *bhakti* environment, at which time such persons appear to be endowed with a natural or

spontaneous attraction to *bhakti*; but this is, in fact, an attraction born of the reactivation of past-life *saṁskāras*. For such rare souls

"who are already eager to hear, *Īśvara* is immediately captured"

(I.1.2). Such individuals do not necessarily need a *bhakti yoga* path since their devotion appears spontaneous. But even then, the same

question remains here, too: From where did the original seed of *bhakti* in some past life rst originate?

For most, *bhakti* needs to be cultivated, requiring conscious and determined work owing to the presence of mundane desire and

other spiritual defects that occupy and dominate the mind. We can

locate the vast majority of *bhaktas* in this category given that even Prahlāda, one of the great *mahājana* (exemplar) devotees of all time, 1 who will be encountered in part 2, laments: “O Viṣṇu, Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, my mind does not take pleasure in narratives about You: it is completely corrupt, impious, agitated, overwhelmed by lust, and tormented by joy, sorrow, fear, and desire. How then, with such

a mind, can a wretch like me contemplate your nature?” (VII.9.39).

It is for those with minds like this whose attraction is not

spontaneous that a process is required; hence the e orts of

theologians such as Jīva and Rūpa in composing voluminous

literature outlining the path of *bhakti yoga*. But the question still remains: Whether in this or a past life, whether spontaneously or cultivated, how is anyone inspired to take up the process at all in

the rst instance? Whence the very rst *saṁskāra* of attraction?

For the majority of newcomers to the path of *bhakti*, this rst impulse is due to the grace of a *bhakta*, also known as a *bhāgavata*, an advanced practitioner of *bhakti*, who plants a deep seed of *bhakti* in the disciple’s mind, which overwhelms it. (The term *bhāgavata* refers both to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as text and to the practitioner of its contents, that is, the devotee of *Bhagavān*; the former is di erentiated from the latter herein by a capital letter.) At the beginning of the *Bhāgavata* (I.2.16–22), the sage Sūta outlines (what Jīva identi es as) the basic ve-step process through which this

beginning seed of *bhakti* is rst attained and then cultivated—in other words, the method by which one typically becomes a *bhakta*.

This sequence perhaps functions as a sort of minipreview of the role

that the *Bhāgavata* itself is attempting to accomplish as its own raison d'être, which is precisely this planting of the seeds of *bhakti*.

First: "Attraction to the stories of Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa) develops for

one who is faithful and desires to hear by means of service to the

sages and assisting great saints" (I.2.16). The seed of *bhakti* is attained by associating with those who already have that seed. Here,

Jīva points to the importance of holy places in Hinduism, as sages

and saints— *bhaktas*— congregate in those sacred environments that are reminiscent of their beloved deity and thereby supportive of their meditative practices (as is still the case today), such as Kṛṣṇa's childhood home, Vṛndāvana. And *bhaktas*, says Jīva, naturally discuss their beloved *Īśvara* among themselves (*anu* 11): In that place where there are *bhāgavata* devotees, O king, who are saints with pure hearts and minds eagerly hearing and reciting the narratives and qualities of *Bhagavān*, there, rivers of the nectar of narrations about Viṣṇu recited by the great souls ow everywhere.

Those who imbibe these narrations with inundated ears without

getting satiated, O king, are never a ected by illusion, sorrow, fear,

or hunger. (IV.29.39–40) Holy places thus provide a locus where *bhaktas* can be encountered, and it is by associating with such persons, hearing from them, admiring their character and devotion,

and assisting them in their service to *Īśvara* that one's own very rst seed of *bhakti* is born: "From association with saints, realization of My power arises. Then, these narratives of My activities become pleasing to the ears and the heart. By enjoying them, faith, love, and devotion quickly manifest consecutively on the path to liberation"

(III.25.25). Thus the association of *bhaktas* is, in essence, nothing other than *śravaṇa*, hearing, the rst of the nine processes of *bhakti*:

“Among such souls, discussions of the qualities of Viṣṇu are relished

and mundane topics avoided. By cultivating these discussions daily,

the pure mind of the seeker of liberation becomes inclined toward

Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa]” (V.12.13). One’s rst step to becoming a *bhakta*, then, is through fellowship with other *bhaktas*.

As a result of this association, in the next step, the *kleśas*, impediments to *yoga*, such as ignorance, ego, desire, and so on, are puri ed, as they must be cleared from the mind for higher Truths to

manifest therein. This is the case with all *yoga* practice—for instance, the *kriyā yoga* practice of the *Yoga Sūtras*, performed “to weaken the *kleśas* so as to bring about *samādhi*” (II.1–2 .). *Bhakti* is no di erent (in the chapter “De nition of *Bhakti*,” we noted that the removal of the *kleśas* is one of the six accompanying qualities of *bhakti* identi ed by Rūpa), and Jīva here situates this process as the second step in attaining the seed of *bhakti*. It is the following of the practices of *bhakti* that removes the impediments to the actual manifestation of *bhakti* itself: “Just as gold, when heated by re, relinquishes its impurities and attains again its original nature, so the mind, through the performance of *bhakti yoga*, is puri ed of its accumulation of *karma* and attains to Me” (XI.14.25). As throughout the *Gītā*, 2 and hinted at in the *Yoga Sūtras*, 3 such puri cation is gained by grace: “To those who hear His narratives, Kṛṣṇa, who is the friend of the truthful and is situated within the heart, cleanses

inauspicious things. Hearing about Him and performing His *kīrtana*

are purifying” (I.2.17).4 The aspirant is at this stage deepening the process of becoming a *bhakta* in his or her own right.

As a consequence of puri cation, the third step, the dawning of

bhakti, can then ensue: “When almost all inauspicious things are destroyed by means of constant service to the *bhāgavatas*, then

unshakable *bhakti* for *Bhagavān*, who is praised in the best of verses, manifests” (I.2.18). The word “almost” here indicates that *bhakti* appears even while there are still traces of ignorance and *prakṛti*-

related desires, says Jīva (*anu* 13).5 In the fourth step, after all desires have been completely destroyed, “then the mind, situated in

sattva and not being agitated by states of *rajas* and *tamas*—lust, greed, and so on—becomes content” (I.2.19). In *bhakti*, when the mind becomes joyful by the practices, it automatically abandons

lust, simply by dint of a higher taste (*Gītā* II.59). Experiencing the bliss of *bhakti*, one’s status and self-identi cation as a *bhakta* have now pervaded deep into one’s very being. The practitioner’s mind in

this penultimate step is in a state of pure *sattva* and “becomes quali ed for direct experience (*sākṣātkāra*) into the nature of *Bhagavān*” (*anu* 16).

Finally, in the fth step, this actual direct encounter with *Īśvara*

can take place, and any residual imperfection at this point is completely destroyed. As with the *mokṣa* traditions in general, 6 the claim here is experience: “Direct realization of the Truth of

Bhagavān 7 manifests for one whose mind is content and who is free from attachment through the practice of *bhakti yoga* in this way.

When *Īśvara* is seen (*dṛṣṭa*) within oneself, the knot [of ego] in the heart is broken, all doubts are destroyed, and *karma* is weakened for that person” (I.2.20–21). The practitioner’s status as a *bhakta* can now never be shaken or compromised. We need to stress again that this “direct experience” of *Īśvara* is visual (although *Īśvara* can also manifest sonically and in other ways, as we discussed). The ultimate

cherished goal of the *bhakta* is a “vision” of God—the personal God with form and qualities discussed previously. This vision can

manifest within the “heart” of the practitioner, or externally to the

senses, as we will see in the Tale of Prince Dhruva: Viṣṇu, on account of the intensity of Dhruva’s mature *yoga* practice, appeared in the lotus of Dhruva’s heart, e ulgent as lightning. After this,

Dhruva observed that He suddenly disappeared. [Opening his eyes,]

Dhruva then saw Him standing outside in the same position. Seeing

that vision, Dhruva was thrown into confusion. He prostrated his body on the ground like a stick[8] and o ered obeisances. Beholding Lord Viṣṇu, the boy was as if drinking Him with his eyes, kissing Him with his mouth, and embracing Him with his arms. (IV.9.1–2) The “lotus of Dhruva’s heart” refers to the mind: the heart has been

identi ed as the locus of both the *citta* and the *ātman* since the Upaniṣads. [9] Since the mind , *citta*, is external to consciousness, *Īśvara*’s form can manifest in the mind, subtle *prakṛti*, just as it can manifest in gross *prakṛti*. Both layerings of *prakṛti* are in fact external to consciousness itself, even as one appears to be “internal” and one “external” from the perspective of the sensual apparatus of the physical eyes (see *Yoga Sūtras* III.7–8). We have discussed how such visions can deepen into witnessing not just Kṛṣṇa’s form and

qualities, but His active pastimes (*līlā*) and the possibility of eventually personally participating in them for all eternity in the liberated state. The spiritual (*Brahman*) body and mind required for this will be discussed later.

Returning to the ve consecutive stages of *bhakti*, Jīva recognizes that until direct experience transpires, there cannot be complete and

utter freedom from doubt (*anu* 16). 10 One risks the danger of fanaticism if one does not entertain some level of doubt about that

which one has not experienced. But after direct experience, doubt evaporates and there is nothing left to do but remain immersed in

the bliss of continued *bhakti*: “After *Īśvara* is seen within oneself, the poet-sages always engage in great ecstasy in *bhakti* for *Bhagavān* Vāsudeva, which satis es the mind” (I.2.21–22). In any event, for our present purposes, in answer to the question we initially raised, the rst seed of *bhakti*, which eventually culminates in the fruit of this type of direct experience of *Īśvara* and subsequent immersion in

the bliss of a *bhakti* relationship with Him—in other words, the process of becoming a *bhakta*—is triggered by an initial encounter with an advanced *bhakta* or *bhaktas*. This is repeatedly stressed throughout the *Bhāgavata*: “Someone wandering [in the cycle of *saṁsāra*] who encounters a holy person, O Kṛṣṇa, attains the end of material existence. Such an encounter allows an inclination to take root toward You” (X.51.54). 11

Such encounters re ect the compassion of advanced *bhaktas* who,

rather than enjoying their ecstasies in seclusion, make themselves available: “Auspicious devotees of Kṛṣṇa wander around out of

compassion for those unrighteous and very miserable people who,

out of misfortune, have become averse to Kṛṣṇa” (III.5.3). As with

the Buddhist *Bodhisattva* tradition, some sages, such as child Prahlāda, even renounce their own liberation so as to help others in

their spiritual quest: “Often, O God, sages, desirous of their own liberation, cultivate silence in a solitary place; they are not concerned with the welfare of others. But I have no desire for liberation for myself alone, abandoning these unfortunate souls.

Other than You, I see no other refuge for one wandering [in

saṁsāra]" (VII.9.44).

In sum, the role of the *bhaktas* in the planting of the rst seeds of *bhakti* in others is indispensable. Kṛṣṇa informs Uddhava that

"neither the practice of *yoga*, nor the study of Sāṅkhya, nor the pursuit of *dharma*, nor study of sacred texts (*svādhyāya*), nor austerities (*tapas*) and renunciation, nor ritualistic performances, nor charity, nor vows, nor sacri cial hymns, nor visiting holy places, nor the moral abstentions and observances (*yama* and *niyama*) attract Me as much as the association of saints" (XI.12.1–2).

As mentioned, the reason for this is that *bhaktas* are constantly immersed in meditating on the activities and qualities of *Īśvara*: Narrations about Me are always taking place among those greatly blessed souls, and these narrations purify the vices of those who hear them. Those who attentively hear them, recite them, and delight in them, holding Me as their Lord with faith, attain love for

Me. I am *Brahman* of unlimited qualities, and My nature is blissful experience. What else is there to be desired for those saints who have attained *bhakti* for Me? Just as cold, fear, and darkness are dispelled for one taking shelter of re, so it is with service to the saints. (XI.26.28–31) The tale of the genesis of his own spiritual journey is recounted by sage Nārada in part 2, and exempli es how

one who became the greatest *bhakta* of all[12] began his devotional journey by dint of the fact that his mother was a maidservant to a

community of sages. This a orded the young Nārada the

opportunity to hear from and serve these great souls: Permitted by

the sages to eat the remnants of their food, I partook of it once daily, and from this all my sins were destroyed. [13] Engaged in this manner, with puri ed mind, a personal interest in their religion developed rmly in me. From this, by their kindness, I went on listening to the captivating narrations of

Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that were recited by them. Listening attentively to every word of those

narrations with faith, an attraction arose in me for Kṛṣṇa. Hearing

about Him is so pleasing to the heart, O great sages! Then, once I

had developed this attraction, my mind became rmly xed in

Kṛṣṇa. Narrations about Him are so relishable. As a result, I could

perceive that due to my illusion, this gross and subtle reality had been imagined to be in me, whereas I am actually the Supreme

Brahman. (I.5.25–27) In fact, the entire *Bhāgavata* text is spoken under this principle of great devotees transmitting the seeds of *bhakti*. The imparting of the teachings of the *Bhāgavata* in the rst place is triggered by King Parīkṣit, who has seven days left to live, encountering sage Śuka. As a consequence, Śuka imparts the

Bhāgavata to him, to the gratitude of the king: The king said: "*Aho!*

The human birth is the most excellent of all births. What good is there in other births—even in that other world [the celestial realm]

—if there is not the abundant association of great souls, whose minds are puri ed by the glories of Kṛṣṇa? There is nothing to be

amazed at in the fact that sins are destroyed, and pure *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa occurs from the dust of Your lotus feet. My ignorance, rooted

in false reasoning, has been destroyed by a moment of Your

association." (V.13.21–22) Indirectly, then, the *Bhāgavata* as text positions itself as embodying this association with advanced *bhaktas* in the form of recording and preserving their narratives as well as

the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's *līlās*. Thus, just as those fortunate enough to have taken birth when Kṛṣṇa incarnated on earth attained

perfection, the text claims that “those born after Kṛṣṇa’s departure

to His abode who are fortunate enough to encounter the *Bhāgavata*

Purāṇa, listen to it, read it, and contemplate it with a devoted heart, will likewise attain liberation” (XII.13.18). Reading the *Bhāgavata* thus constitutes a powerful means of initially beginning (or, if begun, deepening) one’s devotional life.

Satsaṅga* and the *Guru

Within this context of receiving the rst seeds of *bhakti* from the fellowship of other *bhaktas*, called *satsaṅga* (literally the “coming together of saints”), Jīva then focuses more speci cally on the gure

of the *guru* as the most important element of this *satsaṅga*. He notes that there are two types of neophytes (or, perhaps more precisely,

approaches adopted by newcomers) when encountering the

association of *bhaktas* (*anu* 202). The rst, which I venture to state is by far the most common, is that a beginner, inspired by a particular *bhakta* or association of *bhaktas*, accepts a person from their ranks as spiritual teacher. Typically, one subsequently becomes interested in hearing about *Īśvara* in the mode *Īśvara* is understood in that tradition. In other words, one is initially attracted by a community or by a charismatic and then simply inherits the form of

Īśvara and, we can add, sectarian metaphysical and theological

speci cs through which *Īśvara* is received in that community (such as those that will be touched upon in “The Object of *Bhakti*”). The newcomer eventually worships that form in the speci c ritualistic manner, ltered through the philosophical and theological categories, that de nes that community. As an aside, we see this phenomenon clearly from the examples of the lineage-embedded

Hindu teachers who came to the West in the 1960s. Their disciples

were initially attracted by the *guru*'s charisma, and only subsequently, sometimes after many years, did some of these

students begin to excavate more fully the speci cities and

complexities of the teacher's lineage tradition—be it Kaśmir

Śaivism, *advaita Vedānta*, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, or others (and in some cases, such as in some of the Krishnamācārya-derived *yoga* schools, have for the most part still to seriously engage with, in this

case, the twelveth-century theologian Rāmānuja's lineage, Śrī

Vaiṣṇavism, with its philosophical tradition, *viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*, of their founding teachers).

In such association, continues Jīva, one studies the requisite texts

associated with that tradition, engaging them in the manner

established by Vedānta exegesis (methods of interpretation), 14

deliberating on their import and dispelling doubts and

misconceptions as to their Truths. Simultaneously, the aspirant

gradually develops faith in the form of *Īśvara* central to that tradition as well as an emotional attachment to that form. Typically,

this involves viewing that form as primary among all other forms of

Īśvara and carefully adopting the ritualistic and meditative *bhakti* practices associated with that form, according to the speci cs of that

tradition (such as performing *japa*, *mantra* repetition of the name of that form, as one's meditation practice).

Jīva considers this rst type of approach an analytical path,

which he contrasts with the second approach, which is guided by taste (*anu* 202) that transcends the analytical mind. By “taste” (*ruci*),

he intends the natural attraction spontaneously experienced when directing the mind to *Īśvara*, a corollary of *rāga*. While the association of *bhaktas* is the trigger for both types of aspirants, there are those who immediately experience attraction for the narrations of *Īśvara* once they hear them; they do not need to cultivate their devotion or analyze it. For this type of *bhakta*, deliberation and study are not requisite ingredients. 15 But here, too, since relishing any kind of taste is the product of past experience recorded in the *citta* (that is, *saṁskāra*), one can surmise that this second type of aspirant who experiences immediate attraction had previously

practiced *bhakti* in past lives to reach this stage. Therefore, Jīva suggests that such a fortunate newcomer should worship the form of

Īśvara to which he or she is already spontaneously attracted (XI.3.48

and XI. 27.7); those preexisting *saṁskāras* are already in place.

Eventually, the person from whom one begins to hear teachings,

or someone from the community of such people, becomes the *śikṣā*

guru, “instructing teacher,” says Jīva (*anu* 202). While a person may have many *śikṣā gurus*, an aspirant generally accepts one of them as the primary guide in the speci cs of practice and worship, and this

person is known as the *dīkṣā guru*, “initiating *guru*.” This *guru* initiates one into the lineage, and one’s primary spiritual allegiance

is subsequently o ered to him or her. This choice of a *guru* is a matter of taste: One seeking knowledge of the ultimate welfare

should approach a *guru* who is learned in the scripture, absorbed in *Brahman*, and is the abode of peace. Holding the *guru* as his own self and as the Lord, and attending him free from deceit, one should learn the *Bhāgavata dharma*. By this, Hari, the *ātman* [of the universe] and the one

who bestows realization of the *ātman*, is pleased. (XI.3.21) The *bhakta* who takes the role of *guru* is the most important entity to emerge from *satsaṅga*, or the company of the *bhaktas*: “I [Kṛṣṇa] am not as satis ed by worship, [high] birth, austere practices and tranquillity of mind as I am by obedience to the *guru*” (X.80.34). Rūpa lists sixty-four practices that constitute *vaidhī bhakti*, from which he identi es the rst three as the most important (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* II.83), all of them featuring the *guru*: “taking shelter at the feet of the *guru*, accepting initiation (*dīkṣā*) and instruction from the *guru*, and rendering service to the *guru*” (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* II.74). These are essentially a rewording of the *Gītā*, where seeking the shelter of the *guru* takes the form of rendering service in exchange for receiving guidance: “The learned ones who have seen the Truth can impart that knowledge to you; know that Truth through humble submission, inquiry, and rendering

service to them” (VI.34).

Without a *guru*, progress on the spiritual journey is hard going:

“Addicted to hundreds of vices, those in this world who neglect the

guru, and who attempt to control the wild horse of the uncontrolled and very ckle mind through restraint of the breathing and of the

senses, become frustrated with their methods. They are like the merchant on the ocean who has not taken a helmsman” (X.87.33).

Since the *guru* delivers *Īśvara*, he or she is treated with the greatest respect: “The *guru* is a manifestation of *Bhagavān* Himself, who bestows the light of knowledge. If one thinks of the *guru* as an imperfect human being, all one’s scriptural knowledge is wasted, like the bathing of an elephant [who immediately then goes and again rolls around in the sand]” (VII.15.26). And again: “One should consider the *ācārya* (*guru*) to be I Myself [Kṛṣṇa] and never disrespect him or think him to be a common person. The *guru* is the embodiment of all the celestials” (XI.17.27). From the other side, the *guru* too has a responsibility: “One should not be a *guru*, one should not be a relative, one should not be a father, one should not be a mother, one should not be a celestial being, and one should not

be a husband, if one cannot liberate [one's dependents] from

engagement with the process of death (*saṁsāra*)" (V.5.18).

This might be a good occasion to introduce the rst verse from one of Rūpa's other works, the *Upadeśāmṛta*, (*Nectar of Instruction*), which lists six minimal quali cations necessary for anyone who

assumes the role of *guru* in guiding others on their spiritual journey:

"The person of xed mind, *dhīra*, who can control the urge (*vega*) to speak, the urges of the mind and of anger, and the urges of the tongue, belly, and genitals, is quali ed to teach all over the world"

(1). The *guru* can obviously not lead a disciple beyond the impulses of the body and mind to any higher reality that might exist if he or

she has not personally surpassed them. Relevant here is Arjuna's question in the *Gītā* pertaining to the characteristics of the *dhīra* (the sage whose mind is xed on the goals of *yoga*)16 and Kṛṣṇa's extensive responses, all featuring absence of desire as a central feature (II.54–72). 17 Detachment and absence of desire are characteristics of the advanced practitioner of all the *mokṣa* traditions. Even Patañjali, in his usual oblique and understated manner, points to the possibility of xing the mind on a *guru*-like gure but quali es that such a person must be "free of desire" (*vīta-rāga*, *Yoga Sūtras* I.37).

Given the life of extreme austerity Jīva, the other *Gosvāmīs*, and their fellow radically renounced ascetics were leading in Vṛndāvana

in the sixteenth century, in contrast to the spectacle of the

extravagant lifestyles and controversial behaviors surrounding many

modern-day charismatics, it goes without saying that genuine

bhaktas, completely enamored with their beloved *Īśvara*, have no attachment to material things. They thus seek no personal gain from

their disciples: “O Lord with the lotus navel! Those who associate with Your devotees, whose hearts are enamored by the fragrance of

Your lotus feet, forget about this mortal life, sons, friends,

households, wealth, and wives” (IV.9.12).

The centrality of *bhakta* association, then, and of the *guru* in particular, simply cannot be overstressed, and Jīva returns to it

again and again throughout his work, following the leads of the *Bhāgavata*: “*Saṁsāra* is the continued cycle of ignorance of a living being who in reality is *ātman*. The remedy is supreme *bhakti* to the *guru*” (IV.29.36); “Through service of a topmost *bhāgavata* devotee, the intense experience of love[18] will manifest for the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, who removes all vice” (III.7.19); “[Attaining] the celestial realm or liberation is not equal to even half a moment’s association with a *bhāgavata* devotee; what then to speak of the blessings of mortal beings?” (IV.24.57[19]); “A sinful person does not purify himself as much through such things as austerity, as one whose life

is devoted to Kṛṣṇa does by service to Kṛṣṇa’s devotees” (VI.1.16).

Association with such *bhāgavatas* overrides all other *bhakti* practices, including the nine standard ones discussed previously, and can

award the desired result independently of any other means

(although Jīva hastens to add that the other practices should not thereby be discarded! *anu* 283–84): By merely *satsaṅga*, the association of saints, in di erent *yugas* [ages], those whose nature was *rajas* and *tamas*, even demons … animals, birds;… various kinds of celestial beings;… and, among humans, merchants, laborers, women; [20] and many others, attained My abode. They did not study the Veda, nor serve great *mahātmās*, nor undertake vows or *tapas*, but attained Me through the association of saints. Indeed, merely by

their love (*bhāva*) did the *gopī* cowherding women, the cows, deer, and other simpleminded beings such as snakes attain perfection and

easily come to Me” (XI.12.3–5).

Some of these remarks about animals and such become clearer in

part 3 after reading the narratives of the tenth book, where all the

ora and fauna in the entire landscape of Vraj adores Kṛṣṇa, but what should be clear at this point is that this love, *bhāva*, is attained from those who already have *bhāva*: the *satsaṅga* of *bhaktas*. And from among them, the *guru* is particular. And just like *rāga* for Kṛṣṇa Himself, attachment to the *guru* and the *satsaṅga* is a completely di erent a air from the attachments to the other personages and objects of *prakṛti* that the *bhakta*, just like any other *yogī*, is striving to transcend: “Attachment, when placed in unrighteous people out of ignorance, is the cause of *saṁsāra*; but when placed in the saints, it leads to nonattachment” (III.23.55).

Having said all this, however, and given the seemingly never-ending scandals and controversies associated with many modern-day *gurus* (and past ones, too),21 we feel obliged to quote Rūpa’s cautionary note here that “*bhakti* that is promoted by means of wealth and numerous disciples is discounted, because it loses the highest state through distancing [one from Hari because of these distractions]” (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* II.259). This statement speaks for itself. Additionally, and related to the same point, students familiar with the non-negotiability of the *yamas* and *niyamas* (moral and ethical restraints and observances)22 in generic *yoga*— which Patañjali, with uncharacteristic emphasis, stresses are a mandatory and absolute “great vow” irrespective of any criteria such as time,

place, circumstance, and condition (II.31)—will soon notice that

they do not nd a place in the list of the nine main practices of *bhakti*, or even in the much more expansive list of sixty-four practices outlined by Rūpa. This is because the groundwork laid down by texts such as the *Yoga Sūtras* is taken for granted in *bhakti*: “For one absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, the *yamas* and *niyamas* such as cleanliness (*śauca*) and the others are automatically present, hence they are not speci cally included under the limbs (*aṅga*) of *bhakti*; qualities such as *ahiṁsā*, etc., are not remarkable: those engaged in *bhakti* to Hari automatically never harm others” 23

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.261–62). Such basics are so obvious and generic for all mainstream schools of *yoga*, they are assumed by Jīva and Rūpa.

Given the importance of the issue—and the enormous psychological damage caused to the disillusioned disciples of the numerous *guru* gures who have succumbed to scandals—we feel obliged to reiterate that anyone posturing as a *guru* without adhering to the *yamas* and *niyamas*, or who presents some theological or esoteric justi cation for deviancy from these, is completely at odds with the *Bhāgavata* tradition, Patañjali's *yoga*, and practically all orthodox Indic schools, including the Buddhist and Jain traditions. And, needless to say, genuine saints would never exploit the service rendered them by those seeking guidance on the devotional path: "They are peaceful, impartial, focused on Me, calm, see all beings equally, free of any sense of proprietorship,

free of ego, above all dualities, and free of coveting (*aparigraha*)"

(XI.26.27). We note that charisma is not a listed ingredient. There is

much that could be said here, as the abusive potential of the *guru*

disciple relationship is obvious, 24 but such descriptions in the sacred texts at least provide a standard against which the behavior and qualities of *guru* gures can be gauged.

The Varieties of Saints

As will be discussed in some detail from a more philosophical

perspective in "The Object of *Bhakti*," there are two basic categories of *mahant*, or great enlightened personalities, recognized by the *Bhāgavata* tradition. There are those absorbed in *Brahman* (that is, their inner *ātman* self) and those absorbed in *Bhagavān*: "The *mahants* are both either the *sādhus* who are equanimous in mind, 25

peaceful, free of anger, and well-wishers to all, or they are those whose goal is to establish a ection for Me as Lord" (V.5.2–3). The

rst of these is considered great, says Jīva, because of awareness of

the *ātman*, the other because of awareness of *Bhagavān* (*anu* 186).

However, their quality of greatness is not the same: “Even among thousands who are liberated and perfected [that is, who have

realized the *ātman*], a peaceful soul who is devoted to Nārāyaṇa

[Viṣṇu] is very rare” (VI.14.5). Put more emphatically, “Liberation

is not comparable with even a moment of association with

Bhagavān’s devotees” (I.18.13). The *Gītā* too notes that “from many thousands of people, barely anyone strives for perfection, and from

those striving or already perfected, barely one knows Me as I am”

(VII.3). Nonetheless, since we will be focusing primarily on the *bhakta* absorbed in *Bhagavān* in this volume, we should take a moment to at least note the extraordinary characteristics of the other type of great personality, the sage absorbed in the nondual awareness of *Brahman* in the form of the *ātman*: His consciousness is withdrawn from the external world. He should remain silent, absorbed in the experience of his own inner bliss, free of desire, his

thirst extinguished. If, nonetheless, he sometimes still perceives this

world, which has been rejected by his intelligence as unreal, as the

memory will persist until the end of life, it will not cause any illusion. A perfected being does not perceive whether the perishable

body, through which he has realized the true self (*svarūpa*),26 is seated or arisen, or whether, by chance, it has gone o somewhere,

or, under the control of Fate, returned. 27 He is like a person intoxicated by alcohol who does not know if his cloth is still covering him. The body along with the life air will continue, under

the control of Fate, for as long as the *karma* that has been activated for that life has not run out. 28 But one who has mastered the state of the *yoga* of *samādhi* does not again participate in the forms of the world, any more than a person upon waking up participates in the objects of a dream. (XI.13.35–37) The reason such *Brahman*

realization is not sought after by *bhaktas*, says Jīva, is that it eliminates the distinction between *Bhagavān* and the *jīva* (or, through Vaiṣṇava perspectives, it is a state in which consciousness is

not aware of the eternally distinct *Īśvara* owing to being exclusively absorbed in its own nature of pure consciousness). Without this

distinction, there can be no *bhakti* (*anu* 188) and, consequently, no bliss from personal association with *Īśvara*. As we have noted, the *Īśvara*-derived bliss is held to be incomparably greater than the *ātman*-derived one. Hence the many frequent statements throughout the text that the *bhaktas* have no interest in this *Brahman* type of liberation and, indeed, reject it even if o ered: “Some *bhāgavatas* do not desire attaining the state of oneness with the *ātman*; they are satis ed with the service of My feet and long for Me. Congregating together, they praise My wonderful deeds” (III.25.34).

The second type of *mahant* is the *bhakta.* Jīva hierarchizes this type into three categories, gleaned, as always, from the *Bhāgavata*: *uttama bhaktas*, highest *; madhyama bhaktas*, intermediate; and *prākṛta bhaktas*, materialistic (*anu* 187–90). From these: “The highest devotee (*bhāgavata-uttamaḥ*) is one who sees the presence of his *Bhagavān* in all beings, and all beings within *Bhagavān*”

(XI.2.45). This superlative type of *bhakta* has a universalizing vision similar to that of the *Brahman*-realized *yogī* in the quote above, except that his equanimity is not based just on the ability to perceive the *ātman* in all beings but is bolstered by an awareness that these *ātmans* are in fact manifestations and parts of *Īśvara*. But, more than this, his mind is primarily absorbed in thoughts of the deeds and activities of *Īśvara*, personal *Brahman*, rather than in the passive experience of the *ātman*, nonpersonal *Brahman.* This additional element expresses itself more

conspicuously in the behavior of this category of *bhakta* compared with that of the standard *ātman/Brahman*-absorbed *yogī*: Let him wander around without attachment in this world, hearing about those most

auspicious incarnations and deeds of Hari, the bearer of the discus, 29

singing without embarrassment songs and names associated with

these. Following this vow, his love awakened and his heart melted

while chanting loudly the names of his beloved Lord, he laughs, he

weeps, he cries out, he sings, and he dances like a madman, completely indi erent to social norms. With exclusive devotion, he

pays respect to the sky, wind, re, water, earth, stars, living beings,

directions, trees and vegetation, rivers, and oceans, and every

created thing as the body of Hari. (XI.2.39–42) While both *Brahman*-

realized and *Īśvara*-absorbed *yogīs* are immersed in states of consciousness beyond the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* and are thus behaviorally beyond conventional social norms, the *Bhāgavata* presents the *uttama bhakta* as manifesting intense characteristics of ecstasy that are symptomatically quite di erent from the peaceful and withdrawn symptoms of the *yogī* immersed in the *ātman*. These states of mind re ect the greater degree of ecstasy experienced from

contact with the personal *Īśvara* in comparison with the experience of the bliss inherent in the impersonal *ātman*. Moreover, in this state, the world is perceived everywhere as a manifestation of the

Beloved, rather than merely a false or temporary illusory obstacle to

be avoided or transcended (similar in some ways to the enlightened

perception of the world according to Kaśmir Śaivism).

As we have noted, the *gopīs*, the simplehearted, uneducated, cowherding maidens we will encounter in part 3, are heralded as the highest of all *yogīs* and indeed exhibit the vision noted in the last line of the above quote pertaining to the devotionally surcharged perceptions of the inanimate world. For them, "the trees

and creeping plants of the forest seem to be experiencing Viṣṇu in

themselves. Richly endowed with fruits and owers, the trees pour

forth streams of honey, their young branches bowing reverentially

with their load, and their bodies bristling with the ecstasy of love"

(X.35.9). In the *gopīs'* God-intoxicated vision, the entire natural world appears to be worshipping Hari in ecstatic love: "The rivers

found their force disrupted by their states of mind after hearing the

sound of Mukunda's [Kṛṣṇa's] ute, as could be seen from their

whirlpools. Bearing o erings of lotus owers, the rivers grasped the two feet of Murāri [Kṛṣṇa] and embraced them closely with their arms in the form of waves" (X.21.15).

Before leaving the landscape of Vraj re ected in these verses,

where Kṛṣṇa passed His childhood days, to consider the other two

types of *bhaktas*—the *madhyama*, intermediate, and *prākṛta*, materialistic devotees—it is worth revisiting the notion of *yogamāyā*

and connecting that discussion to the mind-set of the highest

bhaktas, the *uttamas*: "Whether one knows or does not know who I am—the extent and nature of My being—if someone worships Me

with unalloyed devotion, that person is considered an *uttama bhakta*" (XI.11.33). This lack of awareness referred to here of who God actually is,

is fundamental to the highest states of *bhakti* that will be encountered in part 3 in the stories from the tenth book— speci cally, among Kṛṣṇa's family members and the cowherding

community in Vṛndāvana. These simple folks are depicted in the

text as having performed *bhakti* for many, many lives before their devotion reached the requisite intensity that earned them a birth in

intimate proximity to Kṛṣṇa during His descent, but they are all *uttama bhaktas*: their love is so intense that, aided by *yogamāyā*, it overrides awareness even of Kṛṣṇa's majesty and obliterates even the knowledge that Kṛṣṇa is God. Their devotion has reached such a peak that they can think of Kṛṣṇa only as their lover, friend, child,

and the like, depending on their *bhāva*.

The second type of *bhakta mahant* discussed by Jīva is the *madhyama bhakta*, the "middle level" or intermediate *bhakta*. His or her characteristics re ect a schema that was widespread among the

soteriological schools (surfacing, for instance, in *Yoga Sūtras* I.33

and as the *brahma-vihāras* in various Buddhist *suttas*),30 but here with variations in phraseology to re ect the *Bhāgavata*'s

devotionality: "The *madhyama* acts with love (*prema*) for *Īśvara*, friendship (*maitrī*) toward those devoted to Him, compassion (*kṛpā*)

toward the ignorant, and equanimity (*upekṣā*) toward the envious"

(XI.2.46). In this type of awareness characteristic of the *madhyama*, we see judgmental behavior, albeit benevolent, based on the

perception of distinctions among living beings, in contrast to the *uttama bhakta*'s feelings of love for all beings as manifestations of *Īśvara* with no sense of di erentiation.

The third category of *bhakta mahant*, the materialist (*prākṛta*) devotee, is far more restricted in his or her ability to perceive the

omnipresence of *Īśvara*: “One who o ers *pūjā* (worship) to Hari in the form of the deity with faith, but not to the *bhaktas* or to other people, is a worldly devotee” (XI.2.47). Such a neophyte

practitioner who di erentiates, says Jīva, and who does not have reverence for all beings, has not developed love of God. Such a person is either new to the path, or devoid of deep study, or expressing devotion only out of social convention (*anu* 190). Jīva further characterizes such a person (somewhat un atteringly) with this quote from the *Bhāgavata*: “One who identi es this corpse made of the three elements to be the self, considers his wife and family to

be his own, holds the earth to be worthy of worship, understands

water to be sacred, but does not accept those who are wise, is truly

a donkey or a cow” (X.84.13).

Jīva then considers these three divisions of *bhaktas* from the perspective of the attitude toward *dharma* and social conventions exhibited by each of them, respectively. The worldly (*prākṛta*) devotee performs *bhakti* mixed with other concerns, such as attachment to the performance of *dharma*, as discussed previously in the analysis of “mixed *bhakti*.” The *madhyama* (intermediate) *bhakta* renounces *dharma* in his or her complete dedication to the service of *Īśvara* but is still aware of the conventional norms and results pertaining to *dharma* and *adharma*, and so in this minor sense the uninhibited and full immersion of the mind in *bhakti* is mildly delimited. Additionally, the *bhakta*’s devotion is also curtailed by knowledge of God’s majesty and omnipotency in this stage. But the *uttama bhakta* is so immersed in love of God that he or she has no awareness of whether his or her behavior conforms to *dharma* whatsoever—indeed, entertains no considerations of *dharma* or social gradations in the rst place. And as we have seen with the *rāgātmika bhaktas*, the devotee at this stage often has no awareness of the majesty and supreme ontological status of God Himself even when entering into very intimate relationships with Him.

Before concluding this section on the varieties of *bhaktas*, we can include Rūpa's hierarchization of devotees in his *Upadeśāmṛta*, but here with the purpose of suggesting how one should appropriately

interact in a devotional environment with di erent levels of *bhaktas*: One should o er respect in the mind toward one who utters the name "Kṛṣṇa"; one should o er respect with obeisances to one who

has taken spiritual initiation into a Vaiṣṇava lineage (*dīkṣā*) and is worshipping *Īśvara*; and one should o er respect by seeking the cherished association of, and serving and hearing from one whose

heart is completely cleansed of faults such as criticizing others, and

who is mature in full absorption in devotional practices. (5) Rūpa

also cautions us not to judge *bhaktas* by any type of bodily criteria, including caste, social status, or any other such material

designations: One should not look upon the *prakṛtic* (material) nature of a person who is a *bhakta* here in this world, nor at the visible defects of his or her body which are attained at birth due to

past-life *karma*. The transcendent (*Brahman*) essence of the waters of the *Gaṅgā* river is lost [if one looks at] the quality of the water, with its bubbles, foam, and mud. (6) Rūpa makes one further set of relevant comments as to what transpires between *bhaktas* in addition to their discussions about Kṛṣṇa: "The six signs of love [between *bhaktas*] are: giving gifts and receiving them; inquiring con dentially and revealing one's mind con dentially; and o ering

and accepting foodstu s" (4). This is not the place to embark on a

discussion of the *āśrama* experiences of the various forms of *yoga* transplanted to the West in the 1960s, but without such loving reciprocations and honest exchanges of con dentialities that Rūpa notes, life in communities of practitioners can very easily and quickly become

institutionalized, hierarchical, judgmental, spiritually oppressive, and, all too often, abusive.

The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*

We can conclude this section on the *bhakta* by considering the ultimate destinations that the accomplished and perfected

practitioners can attain in the postmortem liberated state. Let us recall that the *Bhāgavata*'s de nition of *bhakti* quoted at the outset was that those who perform it were "so free of motive … that, without service to [Kṛṣṇa], they do not accept the ve types of liberation, even if these are o ered. We have made several references to these varying types of liberation and it is now time to

discuss them. These are: residing in the same abode as Viṣṇu

(*sālokya*), having the same opulence as Him (*sārṣṭi*), being close to Him (*sāmīpya*), having the same form as Him (*sārūpya*), and merging into Him (*ekatvam*)" (III.29.12–14).

In the *Bhāgavata* schema expressed in this verse, the generic goal of conventional *yoga* corresponds to the fth item on the list, *ekatvam*, "the state of oneness." It is described by Patañjali as "the immersion of the seer [consciousness] within its own nature"

(*draṣṭuḥ svarupe 'vasthānam*, I.3). We have been referring to this variously as the experience of *ātman*, realization of *Brahman*, or impersonal realization (and will be referring to it in the next section

as the monistic experience). Other terms include *kaivalya*,

"oneness"; *ātma-jñāna*, "awareness of the self"; *nirvāṇa*, literally

"blowing out"; 31 and the by now familiar synonyms *mokṣa* and *mukti*.

We can brie y note in passing that there are di erences in how this “oneness” is understood in certain *jñāna* and *yoga* traditions. In *advaita Vedānta*, for example, there is only one Supreme *Ātman*, which is in fact the nondual *Brahman*, as we will discuss in the next section; so in liberation, when consciousness attains this state, it loses all sense of individuality as well as awareness of the world of duality, which were both illusory in the rst place according to *advaita* tenets. In this state consciousness is aware of only “one”

experience—its own nature of pure, blissful, eternal consciousness.

For the Sāṅkhya and Yoga traditions, the liberated *ātman* maintains individuality and the world remains real, but, absorbed in its own

in nite nature, pure consciousness is aware neither of the real world

nor of other individual *ātmans* whether liberated or not. We would suggest that although the scholastics of the former school posit that

in ultimate reality there is only one in nite *ātman* and no real world, and those of the latter maintain that there is an eternal plurality of in nite *ātmans* and an eternally real world, this is an intellectually constructed issue. From an experiential point of view, their experiences appear identical: an awareness of nothing other than eternal and in nite awareness free from all su ering.[32] Hence, all these traditions can lay claim to terms such as *ekatvam*,

“oneness,” and its synonym *kaivalya* (as well as the term *jñāna*,

“knowing”), to describe this experience. In other words, in this state

it is irrelevant if the world is real or not, or if there are other individual *ātmans* simultaneously absorbed in this experience, or if they have all merged into one undi erentiated unity, as the

experience of *ekatvam* itself is trans-spatial (in nite) and transtemporal (eternal) and devoid of any notion of “individuality”

and “world out there” at all. This is because there is no *buddhi*, intellect, covering the *ātman* deliberating on such things. It is only for the scholastics left behind embedded in their intellect, mind, and

senses for which such issues are important and become the basis for debate among schools.

In keeping with these traditions, the *Bhāgavata* recognizes this impersonal experience of oneness, *ekatvam*, as one of the ve types of liberation. Like these other schools, it accepts it to be a state in

which the *ātman* has no form or qualities and that the experience of the *ātman* in this state is exclusively one of *sat-cit-ānanda* (being, consciousness, and bliss). It accepts everything noted above that *advaita* or Sāṅkhya posit about that state experientially. However, when *bhakti yoga* to *Īśvara* is practiced rather than *jñāna* or *yoga*, the *Bhāgavata* tradition (and Vaiṣṇavism in general) posits that there are four other types of liberation that become available in addition to *ekatvam* and that these bestow divine (*Brahman*) personal transcendent forms and qualities on the individual *ātman* when liberated. We can note in passing that the *Vedānta Sūtras*, in its characteristically minimalistic and truncated way, also recognizes that there is an option in liberation as to whether the released souls attain a liberated body or not (IV.4.11–12), as does the ancient *Mokṣadharma* section of the *Mahābhārata* epic (196.21–22).

God too has a divine bodily form, or more precisely, being

unlimited, has unlimited divine forms, and these inhabit divine

abodes, also unlimited—the realms within *Brahman* we have

touched upon called Vaikuṇṭha. These forms and realms are made

not of *prakṛti* stu —the three *guṇa* qualities we will discuss in the next section—but of *Brahman* stu , pure consciousness— *sat-cit-ānanda*. There is no inert matter there (in fact, this realm of nonconscious *prakṛti* can be seen as something of a dull and imperfect re ection of those *Brahman* realms). Vaikuṇṭha, to borrow Abrahamic language, is the Kingdom of God.

So the liberated *ātman* attains *Brahman*, but not the impersonal, formless, qualityless *Brahman* devoid of active experiences as attained in the *ekatvam* state. Just as the *ātmans* receive *prakṛti* minds, forms, relationships,

and situations in this realm of *saṁsāra* that re ect their *guṇas* and *karma*, they receive *Brahman* minds, forms, relationships, and situations in the Vaikuṇṭha realm that re ect the nature of their *bhakti* (their *rāgas*, *bhāvas*, and so forth). With these, they engage in a loving relationship with one of the unlimited divine forms of *Īśvara* corresponding to their preference. This is not anthropomorphism, but theopomorphism (we have noted that

Vaiṣṇavas would intuitively resonate with the Abrahamic idea of

man being made in the image of God). Embodied beings as e ects

have forms, qualities, and activities because their cause has form, qualities, and activities (to an unlimited degree). So in Vaikuṇṭha the very realms themselves, as well as the forms of *Iśvara* and of the *bhaktas* that abide there, are made of pure, eternal, blissful consciousness (*sa-guṇa Brahman*). These forms are inconceivable: they cannot be fathomed or conceived of by the rational mind or intellect, which is limited to the spatial, temporal, and physical conditions of *prakṛti*.

Some of these relationships were discussed in *rāgānugā bhakti*, but for our present purposes, the four other liberations listed in this verse in addition to the impersonal one of *ekatvam*, include *sālokya*, residing in the same abode as Viṣṇu (that is, residing in Vaikuṇṭha, the divine realm); *sārṣṭi*, having the same opulence as Viṣṇu (omnipotency); 33 *sāmīpya*, being close to Viṣṇu (a closer and more intimate physical proximity than that of *sālokya*); and *sārūpya*, having the same form as Viṣṇu. 34 In other words, the liberation o ered by Yoga, Sāṅkhya, *advaita Vedānta*, and other schools is of no ultimate interest to the *Bhāgavata* tradition not because these are not genuine experiential states, which the text certainly asserts that they are, but because these available options do not allow for the

possibility of an eternal personal relationship with *Īśvara*. And it is this desire for eternal relationship in devotion and service that characterizes true *bhakti* in Vaiṣṇavism. Indeed, Jīva and Rūpa note

here that in addition to their disinterest in merging into impersonal *Brahman* (*ekatvam*), even one of the personal types of liberation—

having the same opulence as Viṣṇu (*sārṣṭi*)—is unacceptable, as both of these are not suitable for service; the others may be accepted if

they enhance one's service.35

Also, from an ontological point of view, while the *Bhāgavata* describes the experience of the fth type of liberation, *ekatvam* (also known as *sāyūjya*), in the same way as the other *jñāna* and Yoga traditions, its metaphysical understanding of the state partly di ers.

In his *Prīti Sandarbha* (*anu* 15), Jīva states that it can indeed denote realizing one's own *ātman* as a part of the in nitely omnipresent *Brahman*,36 more or less as proposed by the other schools (*brahma-sāyūjya*), but it can also denote merging into Kṛṣṇa's actual body and relishing the bliss of this (*Bhagavat-sāyūjya*).37 Furthermore, even with regard to the rst option, *Brahman* is considered the e ulgence of *Īśvara* rather than an independent essence, like the light of the sun, which, even though it can be experienced in its own right, is nonetheless always emanational from the sun itself. Jīva is

not partial to either option, as each eliminates the possibility of love being expressed through service. But he nonetheless accepts their realities.

And there are numerous other possible liberated states in the

bhakti universe. We can very brie y refer to Kaśmir Śaivism, for example, which occupies an interesting place somewhere between

advaita Vedānta, further discussed in the next section, and Vaiṣṇavism. It holds the world as well as Śiva's form to be eternally

real (and vigorously opposes *advaita Vedānta*, which considers the world illusory on this score) but shares the latter's monism with regard to the illusoriness of the individual *ātman*. The liberated *ātman*, in this and related traditions, becomes one with Śiva (hence the *mantra Śivo 'ham*, "I am

Śiva"). From this vantage point it need not reject the world of *prakṛti*, which in Kaśmir Śaivism is ultimately not matter but pure emanational consciousness, *citi-śakti*, and enjoy it as Śiva enjoying an expression of Himself. However, unlike in Vaiṣṇavism, the actual form of Śiva is not the ultimate expression of

Truth, which, as *parama-Śiva*, is ultimately considered impersonal: *Īśvara*'s form in these Śākta systems is secondary and derivative. But it is nonetheless real and decidedly not illusory.

A di erent stream of Śiva-centered tradition, Śaiva Siddhānta, in

contrast, does hold the *ātman* to be eternally individual and also that it attains a form of liberation that parallels the Vaiṣṇava *sārūpya*—here attaining a divine form similar to *Īśvara*'s rather than merging into Him as with Kaśmir Śaivism—but a form of *Īśvara* as *Śiva*. Liberation therefore entails a union between the liberated soul and a distinct God—a loving union between two individuals; this Śaivite school is not monistic like Kaśmir Śaivism. 38 So in Śaiva Siddhānta there are unlimited Śivas, even as only one is the preeminent *Īśvara* who can create universes, where in Kaśmir Śaivism there is only one Śiva and all souls merge (or realize their

oneness) with Him. The Śaiva Siddhānta preference for a

relationship of love between a Godhead and the liberated *ātman* in a unity of two distinct individuals is closer to the type of liberation of interest to Jīva's school than the enlightened enjoyment of *prakṛti* in the monistic oneness of Kaśmir Śaivism, even as both types are accepted as true options. So the Śaiva Siddhānta's closest parallel in Vaiṣṇavism is the fourth from the ve types of liberation (*sārūpya*), where Kaśmir Śaivism is closer to the fth, *ekatvam* (*sāyūjya*).

In either case, from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava perspective, Śiva

abides in his own transcendent (trans- *prakṛti*) abode, which is a parallel to Viṣṇu's Vaikuṇṭha, where those devoted to him blissfully

reside eternally in his company. And this abode and its residents are

eternal and not derivative or a secondary manifestation of a higher

transpersonal Truth. Thus, in the *Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta*, a

transcendental travelogue written by Sanātana, another of the six

Gosvāmīs, Jīva's other uncle (and brother of Rūpa): Maheśa (Śiva), who increases love (*bhāva*) is non-di erent from beautiful Madana-Gopala [Kṛṣṇa].… In his eternal form, *Bhagavān* Śiva lives in his abode (*loka*). Eternally manifest, he is always visible to his exclusively dedicated devotees, who accept Him as their personal *iṣṭa-devatā*, 39 and are content to live there. He is non-di erent from Viṣṇu. (II.3.62–65)40

In the next section, we will lay great stress on the essential oneness of these two forms of *Īśvara*, Viṣṇu and Śiva (as of the various forms of *Īśvarī*), despite devotional partialities.

And we can here do no more than rather super cially mention

that the options continue to expand when one considers the galaxy

of Devī (Goddess) traditions and the liberated states o ered in

those.41 Add to this that all of these traditions have seemingly never-ending subtraditions and variants, and we are faced with many

di erent possible types of liberation being o ered through *bhakti*.

Irrespective of the sectarian debates between the various Vedānta and Purāṇa scholastic traditions, the *Bhāgavata*'s acceptance of ve primary types of liberation, and its acknowledgment of other Śiva-associated forms of liberation, opens the door to a heterogeneous and, in principle, unlimited array of liberated possibilities re ecting the free will and partialities of the living entities. This might be expected if the Absolute is to be deemed unlimited and all-inclusive.

The possible contribution all this makes to the study of religion

will be touched upon in our "Concluding Re ections," but we can

note for now that the *Bhāgavata* questions the presupposition that the ultimate, perfected liberated state, if there is one, must be monolithic or one-size- ts-all, an assumption typically made by both

believers and nonbelievers of a postmortem perfected existence.

This assumption is not supported by the *Bhāgavata*. The contribution it makes to the problem of accounting for the apparent variegation

of the ultimate perfected state posited by the di erent religions of the world is that it opens the door that all, or certainly far more than one claim, could be simultaneously correct. Experientially and

ontologically true in accordance with (at least many of) the

categories and conditions expressed by the religions themselves, not

true in some sort of an accommodating, "politically correct," or metaphoric sort of way. The *Bhāgavata* o ers us ve "standard"

types of liberation (which include monotheistic and monistic

possibilities) and contains a multidimensional view of reality that does not preclude unlimited other possibilities, include Śaivite-and

Devī-related states of liberation. This is not unique to the *Bhāgavata*: we have noted that the *Vedānta Sūtras* also allows for the possibilities of a liberated state either with form or without, as does

the *Mahābhārata*'s *Mokṣadharma*.

And, of course, within *prakṛti*, and prior to attaining the ultimate state, similar variegation is expressed in Patañjali's seven levels of

transrational *samādhi* states (only the nal state, that of *nirbīja*, is full liberation from all involvement with *prakṛti*) and with the options expressed in the *Gītā*.42 And while not transcendent destinations, when we factor in various other cosmological dimensionalities within *prakṛti*—the multiple

(unlimited) universes emanating from Viṣṇu and the various progressively subtler celestial

realms within each one—the postmortem possibilities of a

progressive nature are very variegated. Granted there is hierarchy among all these transcendent states, but the Absolute, being in nite

and unlimited, must be unlimitedly diverse and multifaceted for the

Bhāgavata.

But hierarchies are important to those entrusted to preserve and

perpetuate speci c *bhakti* lineages by bringing them into dialogue with the intellectual currents of their day. And so it is to the theological and philosophical understanding of *Īśvara* in sect-speci c contexts that we must next turn our attention. In order to complete our analysis of *bhakti yoga* as a relationship expressed through various practices and mind-sets between a *bhakta* and a form of *Īśvara*, we must now engage a long overdue topic: an analysis of some of the ways *Īśvara* as object of *bhakti* has been construed in some important Hindu theologies.

The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies

Bhakti and Other Paths of *Yoga*

As a prologue to discussing the nature of *Īśvara*, let us rst consider a related topic Jīva raises: What is particular about *bhakti* from the perspective of *yoga* in general? There are numerous *yoga* paths claiming to free one from su ering and lead one to enlightenment; do they not all take one to the same goal? Here, we reiterate that

the *Bhāgavata* shares the view common to all the *yoga* and other *mokṣa* (that is, soteriological, liberation-seeking) traditions of ancient India—namely, that ignorance of the true self is the cause of

su ering, and it is su ering and frustration that initially prompt one

to ponder whether there might be a state beyond su ering and

hence consider a *yoga* path in the rst place. After all, if one is perfectly content with one's life, why would one wish to change—

that is, seek a "path" to go somewhere else? Any *yogic* journey can begin only when there is a realization that all is not well, or at least when one cannot shake o some sort of simmering existential

malaise.

This initial starting premise is most succinctly expressed in the sequential nature of the four Truths that became enshrined at the core of Buddhism but were a standard set of perspectives for almost

all the *mokṣa* traditions. 1 Here the "path" is the fourth Truth, but it is consequent on realization of the rst Truth, *sarvaṁ duḥkham*, everything is su ering, or at least unful lling (which is then bolstered by the other two truths: that there is a cause for this su ering—desire—and subsequently the possibility of a state

beyond su ering once the cause is removed). 2 The realization of being unful lled lies at the core of the impetus to take up practice

in the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.16) and is universally associated with the quest for *mokṣa*, liberation in the soteriological traditions of ancient India.

As noted previously, the fourth-to fth-century *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*

comes out and states this plainly in its very rst verse; it is precisely because of being subject to unful llment/su ering that one seeks knowledge. Indeed, terms such as *mokṣa* and *mukti*, "liberation,"

denote nothing other than liberation from su ering or frustration—

and Nyāya even de nes *yoga* as such (I.1.22, IV.2.46), as does the *Gītā* in VI.23.

In terms of the metaphysics of su ering common to all *yoga* schools, when consciousness identi es with its subtle and gross

prakṛtic coverings of mind and body due to *māyā/avidyā*

(illusion/ignorance), and consequently sets out to seek happiness through the mind and senses by attempting to ful ll desires

associated with these coverings, it experiences frustration, *duḥkha*, instead. This is due to the temporary and ephemeral nature of

prakṛtic enjoyment and the vulnerability of the body and mind to various mental and physical disturbances, especially disease, old age, and death. It is also due to the fact that, for the Vedic-a liated[3]

schools, the body and mind are not the true self, *ātman*, but inert material coverings. [4] Desires gratify only these external coverings, leaving the innermost self neglected. Moreover, desires are never satiated but demand ever more or morph into some other form. And all actions initiated from a place of ignorance and desire plant seeds,

good or bad—the law of *karma*—and these produce reactions. Since

one cannot accommodate these reactions in one lifetime—and even if one did, one would simply re-react to them anew, planting a whole new generation of seeds with ever self-multiplying

consequences—one must constantly return to receive one's fruits.

And this, of course, simply feeds the self-perpetuating process in a

never-ending cycle of action, reaction, re-reaction, and so on.

Saṁsāra is nothing other than this.

This overall pessimistic view of the quest for material enjoyment

is broadly accepted by most Indic soteriological traditions, and the

tales in part 2 will reinforce for the reader unfamiliar with Indic thought these basic presuppositions shared by the *bhakti* paths with the *jñāna* (knowledge), *karma* (unmotivated duty), *dhyāna* (meditation), and other *yoga* traditions of ancient India. 5 For Jīva, the pursuit of *yoga* practice culminates in direct experience of (what for now we will call) "the Absolute," as is typical of the *yoga* traditions, and it is only by dint of such direct experience that ignorance, desire, and their consequent su ering is fully dispelled.

Here, with di erence in terminology, he upholds the assumptions of

all the *yogic* schools.6

So, then, given this common denominator starting premise, what

about other *yogas*? Is *bhakti* not just one *yoga* path among many that can lead the living entity out of this entrapment by the senses and

the consequent perpetuation of *saṁsāra*? The *Bhāgavata* condenses the various paths of *yoga* into three basic categories:7

Three types of *yoga* have been proclaimed by Me [Kṛṣṇa] out

of a desire to bestow welfare on humankind: *jñāna*, *karma*, and *bhakti*; there are no other means anywhere. *Jñāna* is for those people who have become disgusted by actions in this world

that are motivated out of personal desire (*karma*), and who have renounced them; *karma yoga* is for those who have

desires, and have not yet become disgusted with actions

associated with these; and, for that person in whom, by good fortune, faith in the narratives, etc., about Me has arisen,

bhakti yoga bestows perfection. (XI.20.6–8) However, as we will see, the *Bhāgavata* promotes *bhakti* as the highest path for everyone, not one among three. First of all (but less

important), as is explicit in the *Gītā* (XII.1–6) and hinted at in the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.45), the *Bhāgavata* ubiquitously promotes *bhakti* as the easiest and most expedient *yoga* process. This is for the simple reason that here, as in the *Gītā*, the *ātman*'s veil of ignorance is a power (*māyā- śakti*) of Kṛṣṇa and hence can be removed only by His grace: "This divine *māyā* composed of the three *guṇas*, is Mine and is very hard to surpass, but one who

surrenders to Me can cross over it" (*Gītā* VII.4). Because of grace, then, the path of *bhakti* is deemed easy, where other paths are fraught with di culties (*Gītā* XII.1–6). The *Bhāgavata* too presents Uddhava soliciting "an easy method by which a person can quickly attain perfection, O lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, as

usually, when trying to control the mind, *yogīs* become

exhausted in restraining it, and despondent when they cannot

retain concentration" (XI.29.1–2). When exhausted by e orts

based on one's own *yogic* prowess in the attempt to still the mind, "one should worship *Īśvara* joyfully … as it is by this means that the cause of *saṁsāra*, the cycle of birth and death,

ceases" (II.2.6). So as to transcend su ering and attain

liberation, the *yogī* turns to *Īśvara*, given that *māyā*, the source of su ering, is *Īśvara*'s power, so it is only *Īśvara* who can e ortlessly remove it.

But, more important than this—which, in essence, is nothing

other than a practical consideration of ease—there is a more

profound hierarchical issue at stake. For Jīva, the cause of su ering

is not just ignorance of one's *ātman*, but, more fundamentally still, ignorance of, or aversion to, a higher Supreme *Ātman* (*Paramātman*),

Īśvara, God. This leads to the second reason *bhakti* di ers from other *yogas*: the much more signi cant di erence for the *Bhāgavata* is not ultimately just

a prosaic matter of ease between *yoga* systems, but one of metaphysical hierarchy. There are di erent transcendent levels to the Ultimate Truth. The *ātman* may be the ultimate essence of an individual beyond the categories of body and mind, but *Īśvara*

is a still higher Truth beyond the *ātman*. Realizing this, the *bhakta* redirects consciousness to *Īśvara*, rather than striving to direct it to its own inherent nature of objectless consciousness. This, in essence,

is *bhakti yoga*. While some can indeed attain the *ātman* (also known as *puruṣa*) through *yogic* virtuosity and meditational prowess based on personal willpower, the attainment of *Īśvara*, a higher and Supreme *Ātman*, and entrance into *Īśvara*'s divine transcendent realm of Vaikuṇṭha, the personal abode of Viṣṇu, the Kingdom of God, is attainable only (but easily) by *bhakti*: Those whose minds have become puri ed by the performance of mature *bhakti* by drinking the nectar of narrations about You, O Lord, attain knowledge, the essence of renunciation, and easily attain the divine

realm of Vaikuṇṭha. Others, those who x their minds … by the

power of their *yoga-samādhi*, enter into You [in Your partial manifestation] as the *puruṣa*. But theirs is hard work, unlike through the path of service [that is, *bhakti*]. (III.5.45–46; see also IV.22.40) So in addition to the "hard work" involved, the destination di ers: other processes, for Jīva, such as the *jñāna* path of realizing the truths of scripture; *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, the path of stilling the mind; Sāṅkhya, the path of metaphysical analysis; and *karma yoga*, the path of sel ess duty, can all awaken detachment and lead one to the *ātman/Brahman* aspect of the Absolute. 8 From the perspective of the *Bhāgavata*, these other traditions provide exactly what they claim to provide: direct experience of the *ātman* beyond the *guṇas* (namely, realization of *Brahman*, the experience of pure, eternal, blissful consciousness devoid of all objects other than consciousness itself).

But we will discuss in this section how the *ātman* aspect of the self, while transcendent, is not the ultimate expression of the Absolute Truth in the *Bhāgavata*, but only a part of it. As will become increasingly evident as we proceed, and as with the theistic readings of the *Gītā*, 9 the *Bhāgavata*

considers *Īśvara*, the Supreme *Ātman*, to be the highest aspect of *Brahman*. *Īśvara* is distinct, transcendent to, and eternally related as supreme cause to His re ections as the myriad individual *ātmans*. The individual *ātman* is only a part of, but not the entirety of, the Absolute. So *bhakti* is di erent from other *yogas* hierarchically in *Bhāgavata* theology; it leads to the highest and most complete level of Truth—God, the unlimited, eternal Supreme Being—where other *yogas* reveal only the

individual *ātman*, which is a partial and limited expression of Truth (even as it can attain a state of in nity and eternality). In fact, if *yoga* or any spiritual practice does not lead to *Īśvara*, then it has very little ultimate value for the *Bhāgavata*. 10 Jīva de nes *bhakti yoga* in general as this basic refocusing of consciousness toward *Īśvara*. To understand *Bhāgavata bhakti*, therefore, we must rst understand something more deeply about *Īśvara*.

Let us rst brie y recall once more what we have called the

"grammar" of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* itself as practice—linguistically a type of action noun—requires a subject or agent of the action—the

bhakta who performs *bhakti*—and an object or recipient of the action

—an *Īśvara*, Supreme Being, who receives the action of *bhakti*. Now, having discussed the former two ingredients, *bhakti* and the *bhakta*, in this section we will devote some focused attention to some of the

principal ways *Īśvara* is construed in the various expressions of *bhakti*. This section will be unavoidably more philosophically dense than the previous sections and thus more challenging for the

nonspecialist. Hence, while Jīva places it rst in his work, we have

placed it last in the hope that those not familiar with Indian thought

will have developed some con dence by this point. But we do need to put some metaphysical building blocks in place in order to

discuss the status of *Īśvara* as the object of *bhakti*, which are indispensable for anyone interested in understanding how the

Bhāgavata understands God, *Īśvara*, the receiver of *bhakti*, in contrast with the philosophical context of other important *Īśvara* or theistic traditions of India. We will need to deal with sectarian di erences

here. After all, if we are called upon to devote our lives to *bhakti*, and if *bhakti* involves complete devotion to *Īśvara* (which almost always takes place in a sect-speci c context), some attention needs

to be directed to the philosophical discussions pertaining to the ontological position of *Īśvara* among the di erent schools even as this discussion will require a little more intellectual rigor and philosophical detail.

Let us begin with a brief de nition of terms, which will serve as

an initial semantic base whose modalities can then expand as the discussion continues. We will need to nuance the term *Īśvara* vis-à-vis the term *Brahman*, which is the prominent term referring to the Absolute Truth in the Upaniṣads and derivative Vedānta traditions.

We will also contrast it with the term *Bhagavān*, which appears in the titles of both the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Such issues will occupy us next, and we beg the indulgence of the reader

unfamiliar with classical Indian thought, even as we will make every

endeavor to present the material accessibly while attempting to

maintain the integrity of the intellectual sophistication and

subtleties of Vedānta thought. We also trust the reader more

familiar with Indic philosophical categories will forgive some

purposeful repetition of concepts here, adopted for those unfamiliar

with the Indian metaphysical traditions in mind (and such

specialists will know well that the *mokṣa* texts themselves can be very repetitive owing to their oral nature precisely with such

pedagogical purposes in mind).

De nition of *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, and *Brahman*

The *Īśvara* (that is, theistic) element in Indic thought stretches back at least to the late Vedic period, circa 1000 B.C.E. 11 After the emergence of the philosophical traditions, *Īśvara* (feminine, *Īśvarī*) becomes the term preferred in philosophical discourse concerning the existence (or not) of a creator God—somewhat generically

conceived (akin to the God of natural theology). As noted

previously, ontology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the

basic and ultimate categories of reality and their relations—such as,

in our case, God, the souls, and the world of matter. So in partial

contrast to the term *Bhagavān*, *Īśvara* is often associated more with an ontological or metaphysical category when the term occurs in philosophical contexts rather than with speci c and personal

Supreme Beings with qualities, such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Kṛṣṇa, who

all lay claim to the title *Īśvara* in Purāṇic and epic texts. So there were *Īśvara-vāda* (theistic) traditions, which defended the philosophical necessity of a creator God—most of the Vedic-derived

traditions (Yoga, Vedānta, Nyāya, Purāṇa, *Itihāsa*, and most Sāṅkhya strains) and *nir-Īśvara-vāda* (nontheistic) traditions, which challenged the philosophical coherence of theistic arguments

(Jainism, Buddhism, the Cārvāka materialists, and, from the Vedic

traditions, Mīmāṁsā and [debatably] some Sāṅkhya strains12).

Whether *Īśvara-vāda* or *nir-Īśvara-vāda*, everyone understood the term *Īśvara* to refer to the existence of some type of a Supreme Creator Being (variously construed) and hence raised reason-based

arguments for or against the inferential necessity of such a postulate

from the point of view of philosophical discourse and debate

(*anumāna*).

Now, while this is by no means hard and fast, where the term *Īśvara* often refers to the ontological category of God as rst Cause, prime Mover, Creator, Overseer, and so forth, as can be sensed from

its etymology (from the root *iś*, to have extraordinary power and sovereignty), the term *Bhagavān* tends to be used when the personal form and qualities of *Īśvara* are referenced. Put simply and simplistically, *Īśvara* would be the term used in more philosophical environments and *Bhagavān* among the faithful, so to speak, in which milieus *Īśvara*, as an accepted entity, would usually be associated with the speci cs of a divine form and personality. These more personal and quality-related associations inherent in the title

Bhagavān can be sensed from the de nition of the term in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as the being who possesses the six qualities of knowledge, beauty, renunciation, majesty, potency, and fame in complete

fullness (VI.5.73–7513). All theistic traditions accept that *Īśvara* can adopt unlimited forms and exhibit multifarious qualities—Kṛṣṇa,

Viṣṇu, Śiva, Rāma, and various Goddess forms being the most

commonly encountered—so the terms *Bhagavān* (and feminine

Bhagavatī) surface most commonly when referring to these speci c manifestations, each with unique and wonderful characteristics. A very clumsy parallel to these two terms might be the usage of the

title “king,” which is a functional or political category, as opposed

to the actual person sitting on the throne, with a unique name, form, and set of qualities, even as the two coincide as the same entity. *Īśvara* and *Bhagavān* are synonymous terms, then, referring to God the Supreme Being —the Purāṇic equivalent of Jehovah, Yahweh, Allah, and the like—but while this is by no means hard and fast, the choice of term may, depending on context, invoke these di erent valences. The special association of the term

Bhagavān with the speci c manifestation of Kṛṣṇa is evident in the titles of texts featuring Him—the *Bhagavad Gītā* and of course the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* itself14—but it is used abundantly for Śiva (for example, IV.29.42), Viṣṇu, and other manifestations of *Īśvara*.15

The term *Brahman*, by the time of the Upaniṣads, 16 signi es the Ultimate Truth underlying all reality. It is with this term that things

get technical and rather more complicated. While *Brahman* is often described as beyond descriptive categories and conceptuality, 17 the qualities typically associated with it are *sat*, literally "being";18 *cit*, consciousness; and *ānanda*, bliss.19 Now in some places in the Upaniṣads, this Truth is depicted in nonpersonal terms as a qualityless and formless but conscious in nite omnipresence20— whereas in other places it is depicted in personal terms—as a

thinking, willing individual who is the Supreme Creator God.21 Thus the simple term *Brahman* can refer to either an

impersonal/nonpersonal Supreme Truth or a personal Supreme

Truth, depending on di erent Upaniṣads (or, indeed, sections within

an Upaniṣad)22 and, thereafter, on the partialities of the later Vedānta schools derived from them. We can refer to these

possibilities as monistic (nonpersonal Absolute) and monotheistic

(personal Absolute), respectively, or simply impersonalism and

personalism. When the term *Brahman* is used in the latter sense, referring to a Supreme Being who is the God of Creation, it becomes

equated and synonymous with *Īśvara*. Thus *Brahman* and *Īśvara* can also be synonyms, especially in the monotheistic traditions such the

Vaiṣṇava ones. And in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Bhāgavata*, all these terms — *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, and *Brahman*—refer to one and the same Kṛṣṇa—as they do to Śiva in the Śaivite traditions and their

feminine forms to Devī in the Goddess traditions (the relationship between these divine manifestations—a Purāṇa issue—will occupy

us later, once we have our semantic and ontological building blocks

—a Vedānta issue—in place).

The term *ātman* is inseparably associated with the term *Brahman* and usually (but by no means always) used when referring to

Brahman as embodied in the individual micro living entities, where the term *Brahman* is usually used where the ultimate macro source Truth underpinning all reality is intended. The terms are often used

interchangeably, however. Depending on the school (which again

re ects partiality to di ering Upaniṣadic references as we will discuss), *ātman* is either understood as completely identical with *Brahman*, rendering the two terms entirely synonymous, most notably with the "nonpersonal" monist schools such as *advaita Vedānta*; 23 or perceived as a di erentiated part of *Brahman*, qualitatively the same insofar as it comprises pure consciousness but nonetheless quantitatively a vastly lesser part or individualized portion of *Brahman* and an eternally distinct part. This latter view is the de ning feature of Vaiṣṇavism, the cluster of "personalist,"

monotheistic schools, such as that of the Vedānta of the twelth-century theologian Rāmānuja, whom we will quote frequently, the

theological forerunner to Jīva's own school.24

As a point of interest, the Krishnamacarya-derived yoga lineages

that have spread the practice of *āsana* and basic *yoga* philosophy so widely in the West have their Vedānta roots in Rāmānuja's Vedānta

tradition, the philosophical name for which is *viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta.*

Krishnamacarya was a staunch adherent of this tradition, and his son Desikachar as well as his son-in-law Iyengar maintained their identity with it, even though very few students of these teachers have any awareness of this aspect of their *guru*'s philosophical and spiritual identity, as it was not stressed by them. 25 The other great teacher associated through his disciples with the general spread of *yoga* in the West, Swami Śivānanda, was, in contrast, an adherent of *advaita*. This focus is clearly evident not only in his own writings, but in the teachings of his students Vishnudevananda and

Satcitananda (there are, of course, always exceptions to such

categorizations: Krishnamacarya's disciple Pattabhi Jois, for

example, was a follower of *advaita*).

In any event, for our present purposes, since *Brahman* can take either these personal or nonpersonal semantic in ections, where

Īśvara is less ambiguous, as it is the term usually used when one speci cally wishes to refer to the personal, individual, or, at least,

distinct expression of *Brahman* as Creator Deity, *Īśvara* is the term I have primarily used here for God as the recipient of *bhakti*. The term is especially useful when one wishes to underscore the more generic

trans-sectarian aspects of *bhakti* that would be recognized by other *Īśvara* traditions such as Śaivism, as opposed to Kṛṣṇa-speci c expressions. We have also used the term *Bhagavān* in the same manner, as it is essentially synonymous with *Īśvara*, albeit with heightened personal in ections. The personal Being Kṛṣṇa, as we know, is synonymous with all three of these

terms: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, and *Brahman* (as are Śiva and Devī in their respective *bhakti* traditions). Having said all this, the reader must be prepared to encounter slippage and interchangeability among some of these terms but should soon develop an intuitive sense of contextual

nuances.

Returning to the role of *Īśvara* as recipient of *bhakti* in Jīva's system, there are a few important questions that need to be

addressed if Jīva's analysis of *bhakti* is to be considered systematic and rational rather than dogmatic. The rst is the existence or necessity of any sort of *Īśvara* as Creator God in the rst place.

Second, if this can be established, or at least defended on rational

grounds, what is the precise relationship between the personal

aspect of *Brahman* as *Īśvara*/ *Bhagavān*, a Being distinctive by form and qualities, and the nonpersonal expression of *Brahman*, devoid of form and qualities? And third, given that in Hindu *bhakti*, *Īśvara*, being unlimited, can and does adopt unlimited forms, and given that Hindu *bhakti* is not polytheistic, what is the justi cation for the *Bhāgavata*'s prioritization of Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate causal *Īśvara*—the source of all other *Īśvara* forms and manifestations—as opposed to other claimants to this position, most speci cally Śiva or Viṣṇu? We stress here, on this latter score, that the question is not who is the

one true *Īśvara* with the implication that other claimants are somehow "false gods," but who is the *source Īśvara* from whom other

Īśvara forms emanate or are derived? In other words, given that all Vedānta schools whether monist or monotheist accept a plethora of

Īśvara forms on some level, whether these are primary expressions of *Brahman* or secondary expressions (we will explain this below), then what is the ontological relationship between all these eternal

Īśvaras? Hence, although technical, this section is indispensable in gaining a sense of the various ways *bhakti yoga* can be understood and practiced, given that *bhakti* requires an *Īśvara*, howsoever construed, as recipient.

With regard to the rst issue raised above, the necessity of

positing a creator *Īśvara* in the rst place, the history of Indian theistic (and antitheistic) argumentation—frankly as vigorous and

inconclusive an intellectual enterprise in ancient India as it has been

in the West—understandably takes us far beyond our focus here. We

will simply note that Jīva is heir to much of this history, which had

long been ne-tuned by predecessor Vedāntins (followers of

Vedānta), who defended the theism of the Upaniṣads,[26] prioritizing hermeneutics (scriptural analysis)[27] as method, as well as by Nyāya, the school of logicians, who defended theism on rational grounds,

prioritizing inference (*anumāna*). [28] (As a point of interest, Caitanya, the founder of Jīva's lineage, prior to becoming an ecstatic mystic, is

said to have been an outstanding teacher of Nyāya in Navadvīpa, the stronghold of the new school of Nyāya that reached its peak in

the sixteenth century, when and where he was born.[29]) As is the case in the West, some of the most brilliant intellectual minds of ancient

India had used reason and logic in defense of the necessity of an *Īśvara* as the ultimate intelligent cause of reality, on the one hand, and in a refutation of any such postulate on the other. But by the

sixteenth century, various forms of theisms had long dominated the

intellectual traditions of the subcontinent, and Jīva inherits theistic

currents that had been built on long-established philosophical

rationales and argumentation (see “The Object of *Bhakti*,” note 71, for an example of these).

Nonetheless, with regard to these theistic traditions, we made the

claim in the introduction that understanding one expression of

bhakti provides us with a template, which can usefully be applied to other expressions. This is especially true for many of the practices of

bhakti, as well as some of the psychological states it engenders, but much less true philosophically, in terms of the ontology of theism,

that is, *Īśvara*’s relationship with the ultimate ingredients of reality.

There are important and fundamental di erences as to whether the

Being *Īśvara* is the ultimate causal entity in terms of tracing all e ects in reality back to their ultimate causes—the cause of all other

causes or nal “STOP sign,” so to speak—or whether *Īśvara* is a partially Supreme and causal Entity but one who, in turn, is Himself

also derived from some higher, nonpersonal, even more ultimate

causal Absolute and hence not the nal “STOP sign.”

So despite the many commonalities in the various *bhakti*

traditions, there are signi cant di erences in the ultimacy assigned

to *Īśvara*. To be absolutely clear about how we are using our terms, and connecting all this with the term *Brahman*, is *Īśvara*, who as the object of *bhakti* is a distinct supreme sort of personalized *ātman*, [30]

the primary and nal expression of *Brahman*, [31] or is *Īśvara* a secondary truth who is himself derivative of a higher nonpersonal

source, which also lays claim to the term *Brahman* and thus also something that is eventually transcended? And, for that matter,

what kind of ultimacy is assigned to the individual *ātman* as *bhakta*

—is this individuality also ultimate and eternal or merely an illusory

condition of embodiment in *saṁsāra* that dissolves in liberation?

These issues have occupied the Vedānta traditions stemming from

the ancient Upaniṣads for well over two millennia, with no

consensus—Bādarāyaṇa's *Vedānta Sūtras* of the second century C.E.

makes reference to di erences among predecessor Vedāntins throughout. [32]

These concerns are not merely intellectualism: let us consider the

devotional implications of these positions. If the individuality of the

ātman is eternal, and *Īśvara* is also an eternal Supreme Being and Ultimate Truth, then the relationship between them— *bhakti*— can also be eternal. This would require an eternal trans- *prakṛti Brahman* realm or dimension wherein this relationship can take place and modalities whereby *bhakti* between the *ātman* and *Īśvara* can be expressed—a "Kingdom of God," such as, in Jiva's case, Vaikuṇṭha or Goloka replete with the *rāgātmika* liberated souls. If, on the other hand, the individuality of the *ātman* is contingent on embodiment and ultimately dissolves in liberation, and if the personal *Īśvara* too is ultimately derived from a higher nonpersonal *Brahman* Truth—a lesser manifestation or representation of some more Ultimate Truth

—then *bhakti* is not eternal, but merely a temporal practice relevant in *saṁsāra* only as a method for freeing oneself from the ephemeral world of *prakṛti*. It is thus jettisoned upon liberation, a state of transpersonal, formless, and qualityless oneness, where there is no individuality and thus no ontological space for devotional

relationships. So the issue deals with not only ultimate categories of

reality, but the ultimate status of *bhakti*, and it is certainly relevant to the eternal destiny of the *ātman* and, thus, of considerable import.

Perhaps we can now understand more clearly, given all this, why

di erent schools are going to assign great value and attention to deliberations and debates on these most important of issues and why we must perforce encounter the sectarian nature of the Vedānta

or Purāṇa traditions in order to understand some of the various possible modalities of *bhakti* and some of the di erent ways in which *Īśvara* is conceived in Hinduism. And all this requires technical attention and a modicum of philosophical rigor.

Prakṛti and the Three *Guṇas*: *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*

Before we proceed with this, since we are setting out ubiquitously

occurring terms and concepts here, let us interrupt our ow for a moment and take the opportunity to brie y discuss the metaphysics

of *prakṛti*, the world of matter, the third entity in the triad of *Īśvara*, *ātman*, and the created world. In fact, this is not unrelated to our overall concerns at this point, as *Īśvara* is commonly conceived in the theistic traditions as the creator of the material world of *prakṛti* (physical reality)33 and *bhakti* as nothing other than the o ering of ingredients of *prakṛti* (including one's *prakṛtic* body and mind) to *Īśvara*. With regard to the essential makeup of *prakṛti*, the *Bhāgavata* accepts the overall schema of the metaphysics of the Sāṅkhya (literally "numeration") system,34 although it subsumes the evolutes of *prakṛti* as completely subordinate to and derived from *Īśvara*. But bracketing the position of *Īśvara* for a moment, in Sāṅkhya metaphysics, the universe of animate and inanimate entities is perceived as ultimately the product of two ontologically distinct entities coming together. These two entities are *prakṛti*, or the primordial unconscious material matrix of the physical universe, 35

and *puruṣa*, a term synonymous with *ātman*, the innumerable conscious souls or selves embedded within it.

As a result of the interaction between these two entities, the material universe evolves in a series of stages. The actual catalysts

in this evolutionary process are the three *guṇas*, literally “strands” or

“qualities,” which are inherent in *prakṛti*. While it is impossible to translate these terms into a one-word English equivalent, three

prominent qualities associated with each of these, respectively, are

sattva, “tranquillity”; *rajas*, “action”; and *tamas*, “inertia.” 36 These *guṇas* are sometimes compared with the threads that underpin the

existence of a rope; just as a rope is actually a combination of threads, so all manifest reality actually consists of a combination of

the *guṇas*. These *guṇas* are mentioned incessantly throughout the *Bhāgavata*, as are the various evolutes from *prakṛti*, and thus require some attention in order to navigate the frequent references to them in our translations in parts 2 and 3.

Given the meditative focus of the text, the *guṇas* are especially signi cant to the Yoga tradition in terms of their psychological manifestations; in Yoga, since the mind and therefore all

psychological/cognitive dispositions and functions are products of *prakṛti*, they are also made up of the *guṇas*— the only di erence between the subtle mind and grosser matter being that the former

has a larger preponderance of *sattva* and the latter of *tamas*.

Therefore, according to the speci c intermixture and proportionality

of the *guṇas*, living beings exhibit di erent types of mind-sets and psychological dispositions. Thus, when *sattva* is predominant in an individual, the qualities of lucidity, tranquillity, wisdom,

discrimination, detachment, peacefulness, and happiness manifest;

when *rajas* is predominant, hankering, attachment, energetic endeavor, passion, power, restlessness, creative activity, and,

ultimately, frustration and unful llment result (the term *rāga* comes from the same root); and when *tamas*, the *guṇa* least favorable for Yoga, is predominant, sleep, ignorance, delusion, disinterest,

lethargy, depression, destructive behavior, and disinclination toward

constructive activity ensue.

Just as there are an unlimited variety of colors stemming from the intermixture of the three primary colors, di erent hues being simply expressions of the speci c proportionality of red, yellow, and

blue, so the unlimited psychological dispositions of living creatures

(and of physical material forms) stem from the intermixture of the

guṇas, speci c states of mind being the products of the particular proportionality of the intermixture of the three *guṇas*. The *guṇas* are continually interacting and competing with one another, one *guṇa* becoming prominent for a while and overpowering the others, only to be dominated in turn by the increase of one of the other *guṇas* (*Gītā* XIV.10). The Sāṅkhya text, the *Yuktidīpikā*, compares them with the wick, re, and oil of the lamp, which, while opposed to one

another in their nature, come together to produce light (13).

Clearly, *sattva* is the *guṇa* most favorable to Yoga in general, and one for which there is no excess, where the other two, in excess, are

obstacles (even as some degree of *rajas* and *tamas* is indispensable for embodied existence37). Much *yoga* practice in general, then, occupies itself with maximizing *sattva*.

Not only do the *guṇas* underpin the philosophy of mind in Yoga,

but the activation and interaction of these *guṇa* qualities result in the production of the entirety of physical forms that also evolve from the primordial material matrix, *prakṛti*, under the same

principle.38 Thus the physical compositions of objects such as air, re, water, stone, and so on di er because of the di ering

constitutional makeup of speci c *guṇas* underpinning these

elements: air contains more of the buoyancy of *sattva*, stones more of the denseness of the *tamas* element, and re more of the energy of *rajas*. The *guṇas* allow for the in nite plasticity of *prakṛti* and the objects of the world. The process by which the universe evolves from *prakṛti* is usefully compared with the churning of milk: when milk receives a citric catalyst, yogurt, curds, or butter emerge. These immediate products, in turn, can be further manipulated to produce

a tertiary series of products—to ee, milk desserts, cheese, and the

like. 39 And, again, connecting all this to our present discussion, *prakṛti* with its *guṇas* is a *śakti*, power, of *Īśvara*, and thus all these permutations are the immanent aspect of *Īśvara*, God as world (*Gītā*

VII.4–7, 17).

The Nature of *Īśvara* in Vedānta: Primary or Derivative?

With these basic de nitions and metaphysical infrastructure in

place, we can return to our questions pertaining to the transcendent

aspect of *Īśvara* as object of *bhakti* and whether this Being is the ultimate aspect of *Brahman* or not. For our purposes here, we can identify two general spheres of discussion or contention pertaining

to the nature of *Īśvara* in the Vedānta and Purāṇa traditions that have spanned two millennia, both with their roots in the Vedic (Upaniṣad) texts and both revolving around issues of cause and

e ect. One, touched on above, pertains to whether *Īśvara* is the highest feature of *Brahman*, the Ultimate, the personal source from which everything else is manifest, or whether *Īśvara* represents a secondary aspect of *Brahman*, derived from a higher nonpersonal expression of *Brahman* beyond all forms and qualities. Put di erently, the question is whether the *ultimate* causal expression of *Brahman* is personal or nonpersonal. This is primarily a Vedāntic issue. The second and subsequent discussion is, irrespective of whether *Īśvara* is primary and causal or whether secondary and derived, which speci c Divine Being, *Bhagavān*, is the ultimate causal *Īśvara* from whom all other *Īśvaras* derive or, at least, are sustained? This is more a Purāṇic issue.

We note that almost all traditions stemming from these textual

traditions accept that *Brahman*, if it is to be complete (and also to account for the fact that *yogic* practice and experiences attest to two primary modes of encountering the Ultimate), must have both

personal and nonpersonal features: almost all followers of the

Vedānta and the Purāṇas accept some sort of *Īśvara* as well as some type of nonpersonal aspect to the Absolute. 40 So the rst question is whether *Īśvara* is primary and foundational or a secondary-derived manifestation from a higher Truth, and the second question relates to the hierarchical relationship among the various *Īśvara* forms and manifestations. And it is important to reiterate with regard to the second question that the various followers of the Vedānta and the

Purāṇas all accept that *Īśvara* takes many di erent forms, which are all *Īśvara*, so when considering which *Īśvara* is ultimate and causal

to the others, there is no implication that the others are not true *Īśvaras*. Put di erently, since *bhakti* is embedded in traditions that are either monistic (subscribing to a “nonpersonal” Absolute) or monotheistic (subscribing to a “personal” Absolute),41 and in both cases rejects the label of polytheism, then there cannot be a plurality of independent and autonomous *Īśvaras*, as is the case with polytheism. 42 In polytheism, the gods—small “g,” perhaps better termed demigods (the *devas* in the Indic case, whom we have been

calling “celestials”)—are more or less equal or, at best, there is a minor hierarchy among them. In Hinduism, such gods, *devas*, are retained, but they are nontranscendent but rather embodied beings,

relegated to the temporal celestial spheres of *saṁsāra*, where they too are bound by their (exceptionally good) *karma* and hence retain their positions only temporarily. They are eternally subordinate to

the various forms of *Īśvara*. So with polytheism discounted, either the various manifestations of *Īśvara* are all derivative of a higher, qualityless *Brahman* (nonpersonalism or monism), or they are all secondary manifestations from one supreme source *Iśvara* (personalism or monotheism).

On this rst question, by the end of the rst millennium and

thereafter (but with roots in the Upaniṣad texts, *Mahābhārata* epic, and *Gītā*, dating back several centuries prior to the Common Era), the Vedānta tradition broadly split into two major streams with multiple substreams: the *advaita*, or monist tradition, and its o shoots, which consider the highest *Brahman* to be ultimately devoid of form and qualities; and the monotheist Vaiṣṇava traditions, which hold the highest *Brahman* to be the eternal personal *Īśvara* who possesses unlimited forms and qualities. *Advaita* means “no duality” (and is thus more or less synonymous with the term “monism”; “a” pre xed to a noun in Sanskrit negates the noun, as in *atheist* in English). According to this Vedānta lineage, there is precisely only the one nonpersonal, formless, qualityless

Brahman. Indeed, this tradition goes a signi cant step further than this—anything else is ultimately unreal. There are absolutely no dualities whatsoever in *Brahman*. So the apparently plural and individual *ātmans* are illusory, the product of ignorance; they are, in fact, nothing other than the one undivided *Brahman*. 43 And, more, the world of *prakṛti*, with all its forms and dualities, including the bodies that appear to individualize and di erentiate the *ātmans* containing them and the minds that characterize them, are all also false: an illusion. In the language of *advaita*, they are a superimposition (*adhyāsa*) on the one undivided *Brahman*, like an image superimposed upon another in photography or, using the

standard *advaita* metaphor, the notion of a snake superimposed because of defective perception upon what is actually a rope lying

on the road. Thus, for *advaita*, all manifest forms (that is, all creation), although appearing apparently real, are ultimately

illusory, appearing real only because of being superimposed upon the formless *Brahman* by *māyā*, illusion. They are in essence like the forms in a mirage.

For our purposes, consequent on this, if the creation is illusory,

then so, ultimately, is the notion of a Creator for *advaita Vedānta*.

Īśvara is apparently real only to the extent the world of created forms is conventionally real (*vyavahāra*), but from the perspective of the highest reality (*paramārtha*), neither the world nor *Īśvara* ultimately exists. Just as in the world of the mirage, there may appear to be an oasis with water and palm trees, but when correct perception is attained one realizes there is only desert, so the creation, along with its creatures and creator, appears real only in

conventional reality, but all are dispelled when awareness of

ultimate reality dawns. *Īśvara* thus also proves to be as much a part of the illusory superimposition upon *Brahman* as anything else. In actuality, there is only the nondi erentiated (*advaita*) *Brahman*; any

perceived di erences or dualities are the product of *avidyā*, ignorance.

Importantly for our purposes, following on these presuppositions,

the *bhakti yoga* performed by an embodied *ātman* to *Īśvara*, for *advaita Vedānta*, is useful as a preliminary aid in the pursuit of enlightenment for those still laboring under the grip of the illusion

of dualities but eventually becomes discarded along with the very notion of an *Īśvara* once knowledge of the one formless

nonindividualized Absolute dawns. Put succinctly, neither *bhakta*, *bhakti yoga*, nor *Īśvara* as object of *bhakti* has a factual existence in the fully enlightened, postmortem liberated state.44 There are simply no dualities whatsoever in the Supreme reality, hence *advaita*. In sum, although the *advaita* traditions may perform with serious intent and devotional vigor all the processes of *bhakti* that we discussed previously, *bhakti* in these traditions is, at the end of the day, method, not goal.

With one important exception, the Vaiṣṇava traditions such as the

Bhāgavata (and some Śaivite traditions) also consider themselves to be nondualists, insofar as they accept everything as an expression of

the one Truth, but hold that the nonduality of the Absolute

nonetheless has real di erences inherent within it. 45 This is amply re ected in the name given by Rāmānuja, who was the rst

Vaiṣṇava theologian to write a commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, to his Vedānta school: *viśiṣṭa-advaita*.46 Here, the *advaita* signi cation is retained but pre xed with the term *viśiṣṭa*,

“di erentiated.” *Brahman* is indeed nondual, but there are

“di erences” inherent within it, distinct components within the

oneness of *Brahman*—namely, an ontologically real world with real souls. For the Vaiṣṇavas, while *Brahman* does indeed have nonpersonal qualities and powers (*śaktis*)—such as *prakṛti* and the *guṇas*— in contrast with *advaita*, it is understood, in its highest causal expression, to be personal, *Īśvara*. This Person is Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa/Kṛṣṇa. *Īśvara* is a distinct Supreme Being, who, while an individual, is unlimited in names, forms, qualities, and deeds. Hence these traditions can be considered robustly

monotheistic (even as this Person can also manifest in other

derivative *Īśvara* forms such as Śiva and Devī, as will be explained later).

The *ātmans* are manifestations of *Īśvara* and thus, as parts, are similar to their cause in their inherent makeup as eternal conscious

beings. But they are distinct individual entities, even as their constitutional dependence on *Īśvara* requires that they be relationally connected with *Īśvara*. This relationality can manifest either, ideally, in a direct relationship of eternal *bhakti*, previously discussed, or, indirectly and perversely, by being subject to *Īśvara*'s power of ignorance and illusion, *māyā*/ *avidyā*, in *saṁsāra*, embodied life. These options re ect the free will and choices of the *ātman*. And the world, like the *ātmans*, is real and emanated. Within this variegation of the one Absolute, the personal *Īśvara* is the highest expression and the support of all other aspects of reality (that is, of the world and the souls). All of these entities, in contrast with *advaita*, are inherently real; they are not false superimpositions.

Perhaps we can say that Rāmānuja's *Brahman* is "holistic"—

where parts and di erences exist, but in a holistic harmony—and Śaṅkara's is "homogeneous"—there are no parts. 47 Curiously, this means that, ontologically, in terms of its understanding of the basic

ingredients of reality—God, world, souls, with the last distinct from

but derived from the rst—Vaiṣṇavism is much closer theologically

to the Abrahamic monotheistic traditions, despite the geographic, cultural, and textual disparities, than the fellow Vedānta traditions

of *advaita*, despite sharing the same locus, religious and cultural ethos and practices, and identical scriptural traditions with the latter. And, as an aside, these Vaiṣṇava (and some Śaivite) traditions

undermine the ill-informed and culturally myopic notion that

monotheism is a uniquely theological development of the Abrahamic traditions.

Therefore, in Vaiṣṇavism, the divine forms of Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, and

Śiva and their feminine consorts and counterparts—Lakṣmī and

Parvatī and so on—are not illusory. They are ultimate, transcendent

Beings, and it is they who are the source of all nonpersonal powers

(*śaktis*) and entities such as *prakṛti* and the *ātmans*. Moreover, since these Beings are eternal and transcendent to *prakṛti*, they occupy non- *prakṛtic* realms within *Brahman*, Vaikuṇṭha—the Kingdom of God, within which, for the Gauḍīya tradition, lies Goloka, the realm exclusive to Kṛṣṇa, and also Śiva-loka. Consequently—connecting all

this to the theme of this volume— *bhakti* is not simply a utilitarian process relevant for those embodied in ignorance in this world: it is

never discarded but can continue eternally in the postmortem

liberated state in these divine realms. Now we have a more

grounded philosophical basis to understand our discussion on the *rāgātmikas*: the loving exchanges and interactions and reciprocal service between Kṛṣṇa and His *bhaktas*, when He incarnated into this world as described in the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata* and featured here in part 3, serve as a window into the eternal relationships that can transpire between Kṛṣṇa and the liberated *bhaktas* in the divine realm of Goloka. *Bhakti*, in these traditions, is thus both method and goal.

And there are all sorts of variants. Given our focus on Kṛṣṇa, we

again wish to refer, albeit summarily, to Kaśmir Śaivism, by way of

an example of non-Vaiṣṇava theism. We can now situate it as

occupying an interesting location somewhere between these two

Vedānta streams. We should note that Vedānta, whether monist or

monotheist, has been primarily a Vaiṣṇava enterprise. But although

Śaiva philosophy has not been included in most of the o cial

doxographies (compilations of philosophical schools),[48] the notion of the "six schools of Indian philosophy" that eventually becomes

rei ed as standard is something of an arti ciality.[49] For whatever reason, the Śākta/Tantra/Siddha cluster of traditions did not make

it into the nal list, but these are intellectually rich and

metaphysically sophisticated traditions, with very ancient roots,[50] so their exclusion has likely a lot more to do with the partialities and

in uence of elitist caste-sensitive scholastic traditions than a lack of philosophical coherence and theological vigor on the part of the Śaiva/Śākta traditions.

In any event, Kaśmir Śaivism is monistic, insofar as the ultimate

highest Truth (*parama-Śiva*) is transpersonal and the individuality of the *ātman* is illusory. But this tradition does hold the world to be real and not illusory, as also the personal form of Śiva, and strongly

rebuts *advaita Vedānta* on that score. All form and individualism are products of *śakti*, vibrational creative consciousness, real but emanating from an ultimate higher nonpersonal expression of Śiva.

So these traditions are monistic, but this is not the extreme monism

of *advaita Vedānta*. Nonetheless, here too *bhakti*, while usually performed in a much more robust manner than in *advaita* given that the person Śiva, while secondary to a higher impersonal Absolute, is

decidedly real and not illusory, is still ultimately made redundant when one realizes one's oneness with the ultimate Supreme aspect

of formless Śiva.[51]

This type of quali ed monism of Kaśmir Śaivism is in contrast

with another Śaiva tradition, the dualist Śaiva Siddhānta, where *bhakti* constitutes the eternal relationship between Śiva and the *ātman*, two individuals united in the oneness of love. The *ātman* does not merge into Śiva and lose its individuality in this tradition.

Therefore, as we have noted, Śaiva Siddhānta is thus closer to Vaiṣṇavism on the Vedānta spectrum, as it upholds an eternal

distinction between Śiva and His devoted *ātmans*, even as the focus on the forms, qualities, and deeds of *Īśvara* and His *bhaktas* in the liberated state are less evident in Śaiva Siddhānta, if at all.

Let us consider a spectrum between radical nonpersonalism, a *Brahman* completely devoid of all qualities and forms as represented by *advaita* on the one hand, 52 and, on the other, Jīva's Gauḍīya Vedānta tradition, with its full-blown personalism, the ultimate expression of which is Kṛṣṇa and his *rāgātmika bhaktas* in Goloka, a realm of pure consciousness bursting with transcendent forms and qualities. Kaśmir Śaivism might be located somewhere in the center

of this spectrum, and Śaiva Siddhānta center right, veering slightly

more toward Jīva's modality. Rāmānuja's *viśiṣṭādvaita* school is very close to Jīva's, along with that of the twelth-century theologian Madhva. These schools are both sister (or perhaps more accurately

parent) traditions to Jīva's Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, except that in

Rāmānuja and Madhva's tradition, Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation of

Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa, assumed only when the latter wishes to incarnate

into the world and not vice versa. 53 It is Viṣṇu and His divine realm of Vaikuṇṭha that are ultimate here.

While, as we have seen, Jīva and Rūpa take great pains to

substantiate their understanding of *bhakti* with quotes from the *Bhāgavata*, the notion of Goloka with its *rāgātmikā* modes of love of God is, to all

intents and purposes, a new “revelation” imparted by

Caitanya to his disciples, who in turn “theologize” it systematically

through a massive output of devotional literature in the sixteenth century, as discussed in the introduction. The philosophical name of

the Caitanya (Gauḍīya) school is *acintya-bheda-abheda*

(inconceivably one and di erent), *acintya-bheda-abheda* points to the position that the world and the souls are one with Kṛṣṇa (*abheda*) but also di erent (*bheda*). This relationship is inconceivable (*acintya*) and beyond the capability of human intelligence to comprehend (however, Jīva invests as much philosophical energy as any other Vedāntin in arguing why this must be so). All this is very

similar to Rāmānuja’s *viśiṣṭādvaita* (quali ed nondualism) tradition

—di ering in terms of its metaphysical basics on technical details of

interest only to scholastics. There is no doubt that the Gauḍīya tradition rests its theological superstructure on the substructural foundations established by Rāmānuja, along with the later twelfth-century theistic Vedāntin Madhva, two highly revered predecessors of the tradition.

Madhva, brie y introduced (as the Gauḍīya tradition formally

situates itself within this lineage),[54] established a radical dualist school in explicit oppositional contrast with Śaṅkara’s *advaita*.

Indeed, his school is polemically called *dvaita* (dualist)[55] *Vedānta*. A powerful and provocative philosopher, [56] Madhva argued that there are ve eternal fundamental di erences among the ultimate “reals,”[57] or ingredients of reality (we use the term “reals,” as Madhva vigorously opposes Śaṅkara’s illusionism pertaining to the

unreality of *prakṛti* and the individuality of the *ātman*). [58] There are eternal di erences between Viṣṇu and the world, between Him and

the souls, among individual souls themselves, and among the atoms

of the world. For our purposes, Madhva di ers marginally from the

other Vaiṣṇava traditions in that, given the above metaphysics, he

deems the world and souls not to emanate from God, but to be eternal coexistents, even as the former requires Viṣṇu as their support, instigator, and enabler in all things. There are other Vaiṣṇava lineages in addition to the ones we have touched upon.59

Such fundamental disagreements over the metaphysical location

and status of *Īśvara* have been central to Vedānta since certainly the time of Śaṅkara, whose *advaita* commentaries on the Vedānta texts in the eighth to the ninth century made him a gurehead of that tradition. But these issues are referenced throughout the *Vedānta Sūtras* of the second century C.E. and ultimately have their genesis in the Upaniṣads spanning much of the rst millennium B.C.E. The roots of the problem, if we can call it such, originate in the fact that the

Upaniṣads appear to make con icting statements. In some places,

these texts suggest that the highest *Brahman* is a personal being (for

example, see *Śvetāsvatara* III.1 .), in others that it is nonpersonal (for instance, in *Kena* I.4–5). Likewise, some places imply that the *ātman* and *Brahman* are nondi erent (as in *Chāndogya* VI.8.7 .), others that they are nondi erent insofar as they are *Brahman* yet simultaneously still separate as individuals and hierarchically distinct (such as in *Chāndogya* VI.2.3; *Śvetāśvatāra* I.6–10). And, again, there are references that can be read to suggest the world is

unreal (see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* IV.4.9), and others that it is real (*Chāndogya* VI.3.2). The debates among the modern representatives of these lineages on such issues continue to the present day and are,

indeed, part of the traditional training in the schools. Such debates

mostly prioritize and revolve around scriptural exegesis but also engage reason and argument in substantial ways.

For text-critical academic scholars such di erences are natural,

re ecting the composition of the Upaniṣads over the course of

several centuries and thus of di erent thinkers expressing distinct views that are diachronically as well as synchronically various. An

orthodox Vedānta thinker, however, does not perceive the

Upaniṣads either as chronologically evolving or as synchronically authored by di erent humans: as discussed in appendix 1, they are

considered *Śruti*, eternal divine revelation not composed by humans (*apauruṣeya*).60 Consequently, from a traditional perspective, as transcendent scripture, they cannot be contradictory or imperfect in

any way, but are a priori consistent (*Vedānta Sūtras* 1.4). Since the vagaries of human historical context and composition are not an option, then any supposed internal contradictions can only be

apparently so but in fact must stem from an imperfect

understanding or reading of these texts. That being the case, an interpretative lens is required—one that will organize the

apparently contradictory or inconsistent statements into meaningful

harmony. Hermeneutics refers to the methods applied in scriptural

interpretation, and a good deal of traditional Vedānta hermeneutics

is nothing other than applying such a lens. In fact, it is with the intention of systematizing the Upaniṣadic statements into a cohesive

set of teachings61 that the *Vedānta Sūtras* (also known as the *Uttara Mīmāṁsā* or *Brahma Sūtras*) was written in the rst place and its authorship

assigned to our sage Vyāsa (Bādarāyaṇa), whom we will encounter in the tales.

This, however, did not exactly solve the problem, as the *Vedānta*

Sūtras are so minimalist in content, frugal in explanatory detail, and cryptic in meaning[62] that they are incomprehensible in their own right without commentaries. They too require clari cation. This

leads to the requirement of a third tier or layer of what has come to

constitute the Vedānta corpus: the commentaries (*bhāṣya*), but now on both the Upaniṣads themselves as well as the Sūtras that were ostensibly written to clarify them. These commentaries, however,

further compounded the problem rather than resolving it, but for di erent reasons. Although, unlike the previous two *Vedānta* strata, the commentaries are extensive, clear, internally consistent, and comprehensible, the new dilemma they introduce is that the interpretative lenses the di erent schools adopt to clarify the

Upaniṣads produce explanations that di er radically from each

other on the most fundamental of ontological issues. Put more

precisely, what we might call the Vaiṣṇava-associated lineages di er

signi cantly from the *advaita Vedānta*–derived ones,[63] along the lines we have touched upon above.

After all, broadly and simplistically put, much human intellectual

endeavor, irrespective of time or place, or whether philosophical, religious, or scienti c, is directed toward attempting to understand

the nature of the physical world, the nature of life and the living entities within it, and the nature of its cause. Put into Vedānta categories: Is the ultimate cause, *Brahman*, personal or nonpersonal?

Is the living entity, *ātman*, unequivocally nondi erent from *Brahman*, or is it individualized and thus distinct in some way? And

is the physical world, *prakṛti*, real and actual, or is it an illusory, false superimposition? These are the most basic, essential,

primordial, and universal of intellectual issues, yet ones over which

the *Vedānta* lineages di er about as radically as it is possible to di er.

Thus, for example, Śaṅkara (following a Buddhist schema[64]) creates harmony from the apparently con icting statements of the Upaniṣads by organizing them into a two-tiered hierarchy. From this

advaita perspective, when the Vedānta texts[65] speak of the *ātman* as individual, *Brahman* as personal (*Īśvara/Bhagavān*), and the world as real, they are speaking from the perspective of *vyavahārika*, lower conventional reality. As we know, conventional reality in *advaita* is ultimately false and illusory. On the other hand, the statements indicating *Brahman* to be nonpersonal and nondual, the individualism of the *ātman* illusory, and the world false, are speaking from the perspective of *paramārthika*, higher absolute reality, and thus ultimately true. He can thus accept all the

statements in the Vedānta texts as absolute and true (as he is bound

to do as an orthodox Vedāntin) by relegating con icting statements

to one or other of his two hierarchical strata, lower and higher.

For Rāmānuja, in stark contrast, the vigorous opponent of

Śaṅkara, when the texts speak of *Brahman* as nondual, they intend that everything emanates from the *Brahman* and is thus of one essence. But this does not preclude di erences within the oneness (that is, the *viśiṣṭa*, "di erentiation," within the *advaita*), and thus the oneness is rather a "holistic" than an absolute, nondi erentiated oneness. Likewise with the individual *ātman*: it may be nondual from *Brahman*, as part to whole, but this does not negate its individuality. Along the same lines, when *Brahman* is spoken of

as without qualities, this points to a lack of *prakṛtic* qualities of the three *guṇas*: it does not preclude divine (*Brahman*) qualities and forms.66 When described as impersonal, *Brahman*'s all-pervasive

energies (*śaktis*) are intended (like the light vis-à-vis the sun), and when depicted as personal, *Brahman*'s ultimate feature as Viṣṇu is signi ed. And the unreality of the world points to its temporality,

not its illusionality. Thus, Rāmānuja's interpretative lens also allows

him to accept all the apparently con icting textual statements to be

absolute and true. But rather than resolving this through a two-tiered hierarchical model like Śaṅkara—conventional (lower) and

ultimate (higher)—he relegates them to di erent modalities of

Brahman: some statements refer to *Brahman* as *Īśvara*, some to *Brahman* as the world, and some to *Brahman* as the individual *ātman* in *saṁsāra*.

So the interpretative lenses the traditions apply to harmonize the

apparently con icting statements of the Upaniṣads work well in

terms of appearing convincing for those who already subscribe to that lineage (that is, using the language of Yoga psychology, those

whose *saṁskāras* have been trained to align with that viewpoint).

And certainly an extensive and impressive amount of hermeneutical

energy is invested in them. But the fact is, other equally carefully

crafted lenses can be, and obviously have been, formulated with their own harmonizing persuasiveness. At the end of the day, the relative merit of these interpretative lenses ends up being evaluated

along sectarian lines.

So, in summary, because the Upaniṣads appear contradictory and

unsystematic, the *Vedānta Sūtras* cryptic and incomprehensible, and the commentaries, at least of the two streams noted above,

con icting and in radical disagreement among themselves, 67 the various *Vedānta* traditions have engaged in debate for centuries on these basic ontological issues. Indeed, they continue to do so and, in

fact, this has become part of their very mandate and preparatory training for lineage initiates (and new Vedānta schools periodically

emerge). 68 These debates prioritize and revolve around hermeneutics and exegesis (scriptural interpretation) but engage

logic, *nyāya*, in substantial ways. In fact, since Indic philosophy rarely proceeds without a refutation of opposing views, the *pūrvapakṣa*, the argumentation honed around these issues, has been one of the primary issues de ning the various schools, particularly, but by no means exclusively, within Vedānta circles.69 One need only consider the massive amount of attention the twelth-century

theologian Rāmānuja directs against the *advaita* position right at the very outset of his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* (I.1.1), which takes up about a fth of his bulky commentary on the entire text, 70

to get a sense of how philosophically problematic—and

theologically o ensive—the Vaiṣṇavas nd this attempt to deny

ultimate ontological reality to their beloved *Īśvara*.

Jīva is heir to a number of anti- *advaita* arguments, which, along with so much else, we have noted are inherited from the great theologians Rāmānuja and Madhva by the later Vaiṣṇava schools.

An exposition of them would be extensive and beyond the scope of

our focus. 71 But we hope the reader who has been patient enough to endure the modicum of background philosophical information

outlined above has a better sense of some of the di erent ways of

understanding *Īśvara* and their origins. Hopefully it is also clear by now why the status assigned to *Īśvara* will be pivotal to understanding the di erent ways *bhakti* is understood in these various traditions, keeping in mind our framing of the syntactical nature of *bhakti* as involving an *Īśvara* as distinct object of *bhakti*, a *bhakta* as a distinct agent of *bhakti*, and *bhakti yoga* itself as the performance of devotional acts in a phenomenal world.

In this regard, before proceeding, I suggest that the friction such

arguments generate is more than mere standard interschool

polemics. For our purposes in understanding Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, the perennial impulse to defend the ultimacy of *Īśvara* can perhaps also be understood as a re ection of the deep devotion of the Vaiṣṇavas,

and the eternality of the loving relationship with *Īśvara* that they

envision for themselves forevermore, such that they will vigorously contest any suggestion "that *Īśvara* has been imagined by the *jīva* (*ātman*) under the spell of *avidyā*" (*Bhakti Sandarbha anu* 40). Hence Jīva, after presenting his personalist, individualist, realist, and monotheistic arguments, concludes: "Since the distinction between *Īśvara*, the support of *māyā*, and the *jīva* who is deluded by *māyā*, is established, it can be concluded that devotional activity, *bhajana* (*bhakti*), 72 is the method of attaining perfection" (*anu* 44). Indeed, the main concern of his *Sandarbhas* is to marshal philosophy and hermeneutics in support of *bhakti* as both method and goal.

Finally, and not at all irrelevant to the *Bhāgavata*'s self-perception, as well as its verdict on these di ering possible monistic

and monotheistic readings of the Vedānta texts, is the fact that it presents itself as being written by the great Vyāsa (also known as

Bādarāyaṇa). As noted previously (and discussed further in

appendix 1), Vyāsa is the same person whom tradition assigns as author of the *Vedānta Sūtras* itself, the commentary on the Upaniṣads that was intended to clarify all such philosophical

di erences. We will discover, in the Tale of Vyāsa, that he was despondent after writing the *Vedānta Sūtras*, as well as all his other works, including the Vedas and Upaniṣads, precisely because he had

not clearly and unambiguously elaborated on *Īśvara* as the highest eternal reality: “Having compiled the collection of Purāṇas, and composed the *Vedānta Sūtras*, he remained dissatis ed; thus he composed the *Bhāgavata* as the natural commentary on his own *Vedānta Sūtras*” (*Tattva Sandarbha*, 19). In this way, the *Bhāgavata* positions itself as “the essence of all Vedānta,” a clari catory commentarial elaboration on the Vedānta by the same author and thus the last word in regard to all these issues (XII.13.15).

A Three-Tiered Hierarchy of *Brahman*

We now turn to the position of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* itself on all this, which will open up a further dimension pertaining to an issue

we have skirted repeatedly: the experiential di erence between

exclusive absorption of the consciousness of the *ātman* in its own nature as pure consciousness and exclusive absorption of the

consciousness of the *ātman* in *Īśvara* and, speci cally, in the speci cs of a personal relationship with Him. In other words, it will probe the hierarchy within the transcendent Absolute Truth itself as

argued by the Vaiṣṇava Vedānta theologians (the “di erentiation” of

Rāmānuja’s *viśiṣṭādvaita*). Here we introduce the most important *Bhāgavata* verse dealing with the ontology (the basic categories of existence) of Jīva’s Kṛṣṇa tradition: Those who know the Truth

speak of the knowledge of that nondual Truth (*advaya*)73 as being known as *Brahman, Paramātman*, and *Bhagavān*." (I.2.11)74

This verse is essential in understanding this tradition's

metaphysics of *bhakti*, because the three terms it contains are not synonyms, but ontological hierarchies. Before commencing the

Bhakti Sandarbha, Jīva had dedicated the previous four *Sandarbhas* to discussing the di erences among these three expressions of the Absolute mentioned in this verse: *Brahman, Paramātman*, and *Bhagavān*. This subject is understandably too extensive to detain us in great detail here, but we can partly summarize things by noting that while the Absolute Truth is indeed nondual (*advaya*, more typically referred to as *advaita* or *abheda*), this does not preclude di erences within that one reality, as we have encountered with Rāmānuja. There are di erences between *Īśvara* and His powers, *śaktis*. Just as, in a favorite Vaiṣṇava simile, 75 the sun and its powers are in one sense nondual—that is, the sun is one with its powers of light and heat—yet they are also in some sense distinct (one is causal, the other derivative, diminished, and secondary), so,

likewise, there are di erentiations within the nonduality of the

Absolute (*Tattva Sandarbha anu* 43). Additionally, says Jīva, continuing the metaphor, just as the individual particles of light rays

are always distinct from one another, so is the case with the plurality of eternally individual *ātmans*.

Incidentally, Vaiṣṇavism shares this latter view—the irreducible

individuality of the *ātman*— with almost all schools of Hindu philosophy, including all the so-called six classical schools of Hindu

philosophy except the *advaita* sub-branch of Vedānta: Yoga, Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣiká, Mīmāṁsā, and, from Vedānta, the

“Vaiṣṇava” strains noted above all defend the individuality of the *ātman* on philosophical grounds. The *ātman* may be in nite in terms of the potential spread of its awareness, like the light of a solitary

lightbulb were there no atmospheric or other blockages, but it is an

irreducible and individual spiritual quantum, distinct from other *ātmans*. This holds true even as there is no awareness of any distinctions or “otherness” in pure consciousness when it is

immersed in its own nature—there is only an awareness of in nite,

eternal, nondual awareness itself. While it is prevalent in both domestic and exported neo-Hindu expressions, the *advaita* sub-branch of Vedānta is not representative from the perspective of the

classical schools of premodern Indic philosophy—including Jain and

Buddhist thought—in terms of not recognizing the individuality of

consciousness (although, as discussed, the Śākta traditions are also

monistic when it comes to the individuality of the *ātman*). This is not to say that it did not become a very important school, as is underscored by the fact that all the other later schools had to respond to its tenets in some form or fashion.

Within this tripartite hierarchy of *Bhāgavata* I.2.11 quoted above, for Jīva, the *Brahman* aspect is nonpersonal consciousness—the *ātman*/ *puruṣa* goal of some of the Upaniṣads, the *Yoga Sūtras*, and most other *ātman*-seeking traditions, including *advaita Vedānta*. 76 In the sun metaphor, it can be analogized with the formless, qualityless, all-pervading light: “You are also that *Brahman*, the supreme light, spread out like the ether” (*Bhāgavata* IV.24.60). But the point in this analogy is that light emanates from a higher source,

the sun. Nonetheless, within this impersonal e ulgence, there are myriad individualized *ātmans* that, like the sun-ray particles, can partake of and

“merge into” the greater body of the all-pervading light. Thus, this experience is one of eternality and in nity, devoid of all objects other than blissful consciousness itself. As the light of numerous small autonomous ames can radiate out and

coextensively “merge” into one greater generic body of light, while

yet remaining the light of multiple individual ames, so the

consciousness of myriad *ātmans* can all “merge” into *Brahman*, sharing in one in nite, blissful, eternal experience of pure

contentless awareness itself, while yet remaining distinct *ātmans*, according to Vaiṣṇava thought (and, for that matter, the

philosophies of Sāṅkhya and Yoga).

The *Bhāgavata* joins other traditions in calling the experience of this aspect of *Brahman* “*jñāna*, the perception of the nondual *ātman*”

(XI.19.27). In other words, since the *ātman* is an eternal part of *Brahman*, when it becomes aware of its own nature as pure consciousness, this is tantamount to awareness (*jñāna*) of *Brahman* itself (albeit of only one expression of *Brahman*), hence the synonymity of labeling this experience either *Brahman* awareness or *ātman* awareness (*brahma-jñāna/ātma-jñāna*, or sometimes just *jñāna*). Indeed, there are many passages in the text that focus on this nondual type of experience in very *advaitic* language. 77 But for Vaiṣṇava theologians, this merging of the sun ray into its light does not necessarily lead to an experience of the source of light, the sun

itself. Likewise, the *ātman*’s “merging” into the impersonal *Brahman* e ulgence does not lead to an experience of *Bhagavān*, as we will see.

We need not concern ourselves here with the second aspect of the Absolute mentioned in the verse, *Paramātman*, to which Jīva has dedicated an entire *Sandarbha*, the *Paramātma Sandarbha* (the third from the six), other than to note that it refers to the plethora of derivative Viṣṇu forms. 78 However, beyond even these, and certainly beyond the nonpersonal, nondual

Brahman/ *ātman* expression of pure consciousness, in hierarchical turn, is the third item quoted, *Bhagavān*, who is *Īśvara*, the Supreme Person in complete fullness, the source and possessor of all powers, including both the *ātman* and *prakṛti*. 79 In our metaphor, Kṛṣṇa is the source sun, from whom all derivative powers and entities such as *prakṛti* and the *ātmans* emanate and are sustained (*Gītā* VII.4–7). It is this very personal *Bhagavān* abiding in His *Brahman* realm of Goloka that is the object of *bhakti* in the Kṛṣṇa traditions.

The Absolute is thus not monolithic, standardized, or, so to speak,

one-size- ts-all. The aspect of the Absolute that appears coherent and appealing to any particular individual is a re ection of that person's presuppositions (which, in *yoga* categories, are nothing other than previously cultivated *saṁskāras*, mental imprints, embedded in the *citta*, quite likely from previous lives). In actuality, one generally simply accepts the theological and metaphysical speci cs of the tradition to which one connects, either because of inherited cultural or family reasons or because of being inspired by

a charismatic *guru* gure whose lineage one simply adopts out of faith, as noted previously. In any event, the aspect of the Absolute

one perceives is a re ection of the perceiver: "Although *Bhagavān* is one, he is approached through di erent mind-sets and perspectives

[of the perceivers] and so perceived variously as the person *Īśvara*, as *Paramātman* or as *Brahman*, pure consciousness" (III.32.26). As with everything else, free will plays a role here: "The sages see [the

absolute] di erently and in a particular way according to their desire" (*anu* 7). There are choices to be made. One can seek the

reimmersion of pure consciousness in its own nature as *ātman/Brahman*—the goal of the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali80 and of Sāṅkhya and, as we know, of *advaita Vedānta*, irrespective of whether it is individualized or not (anyway a scholastic issue, of interest to the *prakṛtic* mind). Or one can seek an eternal loving relationship with a personal God who encompasses

but transcends the individual *ātman*—the goal of the *Bhāgavata* and the Vaiṣṇava reading of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

This highest personal Truth of *Bhagavān*, then, for those selecting this latter option, being supremely independent, cannot be captured

by *yoga* virtuosity and diligence, as can the *ātman*, but can be attained only by grace. We can now better appreciate the previous

discussion as to why this grace is incurred only by *bhakti*: “Neither Yoga, nor Sāṅkhya, nor *dharma*, nor study (*svādhyāya*), nor austerity (*tapas*), nor renunciation can attain Me, O Uddhava, as can intense *bhakti* to Me” (XI.14.20; see also *Gītā* XI.53–54). These other paths are by no means erroneous or incorrect, but they are deemed partial in the goals they provide according to their own reckonings of these

goals. Put di erently, in *Bhāgavata* theology, since the *ātman* is only an aspect of the Absolute,[81] one experiencing the *ātman* through other *yoga* systems has experienced that aspect of the Absolute, but not the Supreme Person Himself (*Puruṣa-uttama*[82]). *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*.

Bhagavān supports but transcends the *ātman* and thus constitutes the full and complete entirety of the Absolute. We will continue to expand below on all this ontology, but note, for now, that through

bhakti, realization of the *ātman* (*ātma-jñāna*) is anyway picked up unsolicited along the way:[83] “Because of the insurmountable bliss of *bhakti*, although the *bhaktas* have no interest even in nal liberation, which is the supreme goal of life, liberation anyway manifests itself, so all goals are ful lled by dint of devotion to *Bhagavān*” (V.6.17);

“*Bhakti yoga* performed for *Bhagavān* Vāsudeva quickly bestows detachment (*vairāgya*) and causeless knowledge, *jñāna* [of the

ātman]” (I.2.7). But the *bhakta*, either realizing that this is not the end of the journey, or, as will be exempli ed below, encountering

fortuitously the narrations of *Īśvara*, keeps going, as his or her interest is the Supreme *Ātman* beyond, *Paramātman*[84] *Bhagavān*, the Godhead who sustains but transcends the individual *ātman*.

The Rejection of *Brahman*

Ultimately, the reason the *bhakta* is interested in *Bhagavān* rather than solely the individual *ātman* boils down to a simple fact: whatever bliss (*ānanda*) is inherent in the *ātman* (*Brahman*) pales in comparison with the bliss experienced when coming in contact with the source of all bliss, *Bhagavān*. Rūpa states that "if the bliss of *Brahman* were multiplied billions of times, it would not equal a drop in the ocean of the happiness of *bhakti*!" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant I.1.38). This is a response to the Upaniṣads, where the bliss of *Brahman* is itself billions of times greater than the highest imaginable bliss in the world (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* IV.3.32–33; *Taittirīya* II.8).

All living beings ultimately seek bliss, *ānanda*, in some form or fashion, but what constitutes bliss is evaluated di erently. For those

ignorant of the *ātman*, it is determined in accordance with the *guṇas* prominent in the mind. So, following the *Gītā*, for those in *sattva*, happiness comes from tranquillity of mind, and even though

cultivating this in the beginning is unpalatable (typically because old *rājasic* and *tāmasic saṁskāras* forcefully protest at the outset as one struggles to break their impulses), it develops into nectar in the

end (XVIII.37). [85] For those in *rajas*, happiness is sought from sensual indulgences, and although this appears like nectar in the beginning,

it ends as poison (XVIII.38). Sensual pleasures are temporal, and one

becomes frustrated when they come to an end or when they cannot

be attained in the rst place; moreover, there is always a hidden and unexpected price tag on sensual indulgences. Happiness in

tamas is sought in sleep, laziness, and intoxication, and these delude the self both in the beginning and in the end (XVIII.39). Thus, while

the happiness of *sattva* is deemed to be the highest attainable by the material mind, as Patañjali states, the wise perceive that all

happiness produced by the *guṇas* is actually su ering, even that of *sattva*. This is because such happiness is always temporary and subject to change, and it is always a icted by the inevitable

unwelcome intrusions and inconveniences of embodied life (II.15).

So all happiness derived from the *guṇas* binds the *ātman* (*Gītā*

XIV.5 .).

For those pursuing knowledge of the self, who reject these types

of so-called happiness temporarily produced by the *guṇas* (*Gītā*

V.21–22), happiness is identi ed as lying beyond the mind, as the

"in nite bliss" inherent in the *ātman* itself (*Gītā* VI.21–22). The paths of generic *yoga* and *jñāna* strive for this bliss (or, with Nyāya, freedom from su ering86). But *bhakti* proposes an even higher state of bliss attainable by the devotionalized mind. First of all, even before attaining its grand nale of a vision of *Bhagavān* and a direct personal relationship with Him, simply initiating the practices of *bhakti yoga* is joyful in comparison with other processes, precisely because of its connection with *Bhagavān*, who is the source of bliss. 87

Compared with this, "even pure knowledge (*jñāna*) [of the *ātman*] is unattractive when devoid of love for Kṛṣṇa" (I.5.12). For the

Bhāgavata, the path of *jñāna* and nondevotional *yoga* is, in actuality, dry, tedious, frustrating, and seemingly never-ending in comparison:

"Those who have rejected *bhakti*, the most bene cial path, toil hard to obtain knowledge [of the *ātman*] exclusively. For them toil itself is the only

outcome, nothing else, just like those who thresh the coarse outer husks of grain" (X.14.4).

In fact, the text goes so far as to suggest that those who realize

the *ātman* may not in fact even be able to remain in that state if they neglect *bhakti*: "Others, O lotus-eyed One [Kṛṣṇa], consider

themselves liberated, but their minds are impure because of turning away from You. They attain the highest destination [realization of

the *ātman*] with di culty, but, since their minds are indi erent to Your lotus feet, they fall back down" (X.2.32). In other words, the

latent desires (*kleśas*) of the mind may be in a state of suppression (*nirodhaḥ*) for prolonged periods , but without *bhakti*, they may resurface and compel consciousness back into the realm of *prakṛti*.

We note that even Patāñjali includes *Īśvara-praṇidhāna*, devotion to *Īśvara* —which Vyāsa in his commentary glosses as *bhakti viśeṣa*, "a special type of *bhakti*"—as a requisite practice for removing the *kleśas* (II.1–2). This position that even *mokṣa* can be attained only by the grace of *Iśvara* in fact has much earlier precedents (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* VI.15; *Mokṣadharma* 300.3).

But the *Bhāgavata* takes a signi cant step further still: some *yogīs* who have already attained the state beyond the *guṇas*—whose minds have been suppressed such that consciousness can be

exclusively immersed in its own nature of consciousness, *ātma-jñāna*

(in other words, who have attained the goal of classical *yoga*)—

relinquish this state and voluntarily *reconnect* with their senses and minds in order to hear, study, and speak about the pastimes (*līlās*) of Kṛṣṇa. The goal of traditions such as that of Patañjali is precisely to

disconnect from the mind and senses in order to reimmerse consciousness in its own nature. 88 But numerous *ātman*-realized *yogīs* who have actually

attained this state, if they somehow encounter *Bhagavān* and consequently become *bhaktas*, opt to reconnect with the very mind and senses they had previously endeavored so arduously to transcend. This is in order to be able to become immersed in thoughts of *Bhagavān*, speci cally of His form, qualities, and deeds, for which they need the mind and senses of perception (we will discuss the spiritual *Brahman* mind and senses attained in the postmortem liberated state later). King Parīkṣit, the recipient of the *Bhāgavata*, is confused by sage Śuka's

exempli cation of this anomaly: "Śuka had renounced all worldly activities, and was without attachments, and indi erent to

everything, O sage. He was absorbed in the bliss of the *ātman* self.

Why did he then study this huge work [the *Bhāgavata*]?"

Sage Saunaka replies: "Sages who delight in the *ātman* self,

who are without worldly bonds, perform devotion to Hari

without any motive, such is the nature of His qualities.

Therefore, Śuka, son of Bādarāyaṇa [Vyāsa], whose mind had

become captured by the qualities of Hari, studied this great

narration." (I.7.9–11) This is repeated again at the end of the

text: "Śuka's consciousness (*ceta*) was xed in the bliss of his

own self and he had cast o all notions of duality. Nonetheless,

his xity was drawn away by the delightful *līlās*, pastimes, of

the infallible Ajita [Kṛṣṇa]" (12.12.68). And, indeed, Śuka

states this about himself: "Although I was xed in the state

beyond the *guṇas*, my mind was captured by the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa; and so I learned about His pastimes" (2.1.9). His father, too,

the great Vyāsa, "although he was xed in the bliss of the self

and devoid of any other thought, his heart was attracted to the

enchanting *līlās* of the infallible Kṛṣṇa; out of kindness [for others], he then composed this *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*" (XII.12.68).

As will be especially encountered in the tenth book, then, the *Bhāgavata*, promotes the bliss of sensual contact with Kṛṣṇa as far superior to any bliss inherent in the *ātman* when immersed in its own nature after uncoupling from the *prakṛtic guṇas.* Such contact with Kṛṣṇa can be attained either directly for those who had accumulated enough merit to have been born during His incarnation

or, for those born thereafter, indirectly by means of hearing about

His pastimes from the tenth book (or, of course, eternally in the post-liberated realm of Goloka or Vaikuṇṭha). Either way, the bliss

received by means of the senses and mind, whether made of *prakṛti*

or *Brahman*, from contact with *Īśvara*, including hearing about His activities through the ear, is held to eclipse the bliss of the *ātman*'s self-absorption . We can recall that one of the characteristics of *bhakti* delineated by Rūpa is that it minimizes interest in *mokṣa*— *Brahman*/*ātman*-centered liberation. This is a theme repeated again and again in the *Bhāgavata*.89 The text is simply pervaded with claims to the e ect that *mokṣa* is rejected by the *bhaktas* who are fully satis ed serving Kṛṣṇa,90 or simply hearing or chanting about and meditating on Him, 91 and especially rejected if it means separation from Kṛṣṇa.92 Put more dramatically, devoid of the presence of the beloved Lord, *mokṣa* is, in fact, equal to hell (VI.17.28). This phenomenon, in turn, leads to another of the six characteristics of *bhakti* identi ed by Rūpa—the di culty of the attainment of real (unmixed) *bhakti*: "Among tens of millions of those perfected beings who have attained *mukti*, liberation, one who is devoted to Nārāyaṇa is very hard to nd" (VI.14.5). Here, the *Bhāgavata* is echoing the *Gītā*: "Among thousands of people, hardly any strive for perfection. And of those striving and even from those who have attained perfection, hardly any know Me in truth" (VII.3).

The ip side of this is that "until the *yogī* does not become disillusioned with the various other paths of *yoga*, he or she will not develop attraction for the stories of Kṛṣṇa" (IV.23.12).93

Who Is the Supreme *Īśvara*?: The Purāṇic Context

Moving on to the second fundamental issue we raised at the

beginning of this section concerning *Īśvara* as the object or recipient of *bhakti*, what is the *Bhāgavata*'s justi cation for identifying the highest expression of *Īśvara* as Kṛṣṇa, as opposed to other claimants to this position, most speci cally, Śiva or Viṣṇu? In other words, given that most Hindu traditions, including *advaita Vedānta*, accept *Īśvara* in some sort of

sense, then, bracketing the issue touched upon above as to whether *Īśvara* is the ultimate and causal entity or a nonultimate and derivative entity (or, as per *advaita*, a superimposition on the Absolute), since everyone accepts an *Īśvara*

at some level, then who is the ultimate *Īśvara*? This discussion plays out more in Purāṇa-related than in Vedānta contexts. At the risk of

repetition (given the common misperception of Hinduism as

polytheistic), Hindu theists of all *bhakti* schools hold that *Īśvara*, if unlimited, can assume unlimited *Īśvara* forms (irrespective of whether these are ultimately true, as per the Vaiṣṇavas, or only relatively true, as per *advaita*). So the question is not who is the real and true *Īśvara* and who is not, but which of these forms is the source, causal *Īśvara* from whom the other *Īśvaras* emanate—or, in the language of the *Bhāgavata*, the seed from which other *avatāras* emerge (III.9.2)? Readers familiar with the various streams of post-Vedic *bhakti* know that these are not polytheistic, but either monotheistic or monistic. Therefore, these *Īśvara* forms are not independent autonomous equals, as is (more or less) the case with polytheism, but emanate from one source. Either this source is

monistic—re ecting the discussion above, where *Īśvara* (whether real or illusory) is held to be nonultimate and derived from a higher

Absolute—which in its highest and ultimate expression is a

qualityless, nonindividualized Truth, or this source is monotheistic,

which requires one original, ultimate, Supreme *Īśvara*. So both monism and monotheism in their very di erent ways constitute a

“mono-source,” not a “poly-source.” But either way, one still has to

account for the relationship among the multifarious *Īśvaras.*

Accordingly, most traditions (even, in his own way, Śaṅkara) end up

subscribing to one particular form of *Īśvara* as the fountainhead of all other *Īśvara* emanations. And, once again, we are referring exclusively to Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu and His incarnations, Śiva, and their consorts (God on high with a capital "G")—not to the lower-level celestials in *saṁsāra* (gods with a small "g"), whose worship in the Vedic period can in fact be seen as constituting a type of polytheism. 94

We should also note that this is a scholastic issue: the vast majority of Hindus o er devotion to numerous forms and

personalities of *Īśvara*, especially in cultural contexts such as participating in the major celebratory days associated with the

di erent forms of *Īśvara*— for example, *janmāṣṭami*, Kṛṣṇa's birthday; *Rāma-navamī*, Rāma's birthday; and *Śivarātrī*, sacred to Śiva.95 Even though most Hindus, and certainly most who have a serious *bhakti* practice, will orient their own personal and private everyday

devotion toward one particular form, the *iṣṭa-devatā*, Lord of the heart (noted, for instance, in *Yoga Sūtras* II.44), the question of which *Īśvara* is primary and ultimate and which derivative and emanational is far more a feature of scholastic and lineage-bearing96

bhakti than the generic *bhakti* encountered on a grassroots level.

Nonetheless, emerging traditions needed to establish their

credentials and sectarian partialities based on the intellectual and epistemological criteria of the time. This, in Vedānta circles, as we

can see with Jīva's defense of the authority of the *Bhāgavata* itself (see appendix 1), meant quoting scripture, the *Śrūti* and *Smṛti*.97 And this, in turn, required a signi cant degree of scholasticism.

Before we engage some of the intellectual issues that have been

(and remain) important to the theologians of the various *bhakti* sects, let us consider *Īśvara* from a heart (nonscholastic) perspective

—one much more re ective of the on-the-ground *bhakti* of the practitioner. Ultimately, one's preference for a particular *Īśvara* form, the *iṣṭa-devatā* (worshipful Lord) such as Kṛṣṇa or Śiva, over any other should re ect the heart inclination of the devotee and nothing more. There are various ways one can encounter and subsequently develop such an emotional relationship with who

becomes one's *iṣṭa-devatā*. Often, for example, this may simply be inherited from one's family tradition, or local culture, and thus

re ects one's *karma* in the form of birth (*jati*), and geography (*deśa*), along the lines of *Yoga Sūtras* II.13. For those perhaps more dedicated to pursuing a path less preconditioned by the accidents of familial or regional culture, one's *iṣṭa-devatā* is most often simply inherited from one's *guru*, as discussed previously. In other words , one rst becomes attracted by a charismatic individual whose

spiritual qualities one wishes to emulate, and then, as this

relationship deepens into a *guru*-disciple relationship, one subsequently adopts the *Īśvara* form—and in fact entire edi ce of theological and ritual speci cities associated with that form—from

this *guru*'s lineage. This is by far the most common manner of connecting to a form of *Īśvara* for those stepping outside of their birth traditions, including Westerners. (We see, in the West, the partiality of Neem Karoli Baba's followers to Rāma and Hanumān, for example, Swami Muktānanda's to Śiva, and Bhaktivedānta

Swami's to Kṛṣṇa, the disciples typically following the preference or

lineage deity of their *guru*.) Attraction to one's *iṣṭa-devatā* may also be born from reading the stories connected with the various *Īśvara*

incarnations and manifestations, as per Patañjali's *svādhyāyād iṣṭa-devatā-samprayogaḥ*, "from study, one encounters one's Lord of the heart" (II.44). Just as in romantic relationships in the human realm

(at least in their idealized form), a person looking for love or for a

spouse might undertake a dating spree in order to seek opportunities

to become acquainted with a suitable person, so in *bhakti* one can seek one's *iṣṭa-devatā* by undertaking a study project of the respective texts associated with the various *Īśvara* options—Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Rāma, the Goddess, and so on. As in human relationships, from all the available possible romantic partners, an eventual attraction evolves from association and from discovering more and

more about the qualities and attributes of one particular person, and

this (ideally) develops into love, so, in divine relationships, an attraction to a particular *Īśvara* form can be accomplished by

svādhyāya, study. One explores the universe of various *Īśvara* forms by immersing oneself in their stories, forms, qualities, deeds, and modes of interaction with their devotees (for instance, by reading the *Bhāgavata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and Śiva-and Devī-centered texts), and eventually one's heart becomes naturally especially attracted to one speci c manifestation of *Īśvara*. He or She becomes one's *iṣṭa-devatā*.

This usually means that one subsequently adopts that

manifestation's speci c name as one's *japa mantra* and engages in worship of His or Her deity form following the speci cs of ritual associated with that form98—in other words, one engages the nine processes of *bhakti* (or sectarian variants of them) centered on that form. For most Hindus, it is these types of natural and spontaneous attractions for a particular form of *Īśvara*—always appreciative of and ready to honor and participate in the worship of other forms,

but privately devoted to one's own cherished *iṣṭa-devatā*—that lies at the heart of the dedicated *bhakti yoga* of the committed practitioner.

There is a touching story in the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* underscoring the personal and heart nature of true *bhakti*, where love for an adored form of

Īśvara transcends all social or cultural legislation and, in this case, even the presence of an enormously powerful *guru* charismatic (indeed, one considered an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa Himself

in Jīva's Gauḍīya tradition), *Śrī* Caitanya. Caitanya lovingly recounts the immovable faith of Murāri Gupta in *Śrī* Rāma, despite his testing this by persistently promoting the unsurpassed superexcellence of Kṛṣṇa: Once I tried to tempt him again and again, "Most sweet, O

Gupta is Vrajendrakumāra [Kṛṣṇa], Bhagavān Himself;… His actions

are sweet, the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa is sweet. Worship that Kṛṣṇa, take refuge in that Kṛṣṇa; there is no worship in the heart apart from that Kṛṣṇa." In this way again and again he listened to my words, and

because of my praise, his mind was turned a little … he went to his

home and he re ected, into the night, and he thought anxiously about his abandonment of Raghunātha [Rāma]. "How shall I

abandon the feet of Raghunātha? Kill me, O Rāma, tonight!" Thus he wept the whole night; he had no peace of mind, and he was awake all the night. In the morning he came and held my feet, and

weeping he pleaded with me thus. "I have laid my head at the feet

of Raghunātha. I cannot take my head away, there is pain in my heart.… Tell me what I should do. In this situation, give mercy to

me, O you who are full of mercy; let me die before you, let this indecision be over." When I heard this, I was very happy in my mind, and I raised him up and embraced him. "O most perfect

Gupta, your faith is very deep; your heart has not been shaken by

my words … to know the rmness of your *bhāva* (love) I have tempted you again and again. You are a servant of Rāma like the

incarnate Hanumān; how could you abandon His lotus feet?" That

Murāri Gupta is like my own heart; when I hear of his humility, my

heart bursts. (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Mādhya līlā* 15.138–57) The point is, just as in human romantic a airs, although one may personally

nd the qualities and appearance of one's intimate beloved the most

attractive, there is no need to disparage other candidates or seek to

lure someone away from his or her heart's di erent choice.

Likewise, one can have an intense relationship with one's *iṣṭa-devatā*

without the need for any sectarian exclusivism (or, for that matter,

the inclusivistic hierarchization that we will encounter with Jīva that is so typical of Hinduism). This author's own teacher, just as an

example of this, despite being a lifelong ascetic *bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa and ultraorthodox *ācārya* lineage bearer of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, initiates his last published work99 with the following invocation: *Mādhavomādhavāv īśau*

sarva-siddhi-vidhāyinau

Vande

parasparātmānau paraspara-nati-prīyau I o er my obeisances to the two *Īśvaras*— Kṛṣṇa, the husband of Mā100 (Lakṣmī), and Śiva, the husband of Umā (Parvatī), who are the source of all perfection.

They are always united, and lled with mutual love and respect for each other.

Such catholic spirit is not just a cultural matter, and certainly not

anything to do with modern notions of political correctness: all schools accept that the di erent manifestations of *Īśvara* are factually and ontologically the same Supreme Being. Consider the *Bhāgavata* story of

sage Atri (IV.1.19–30), who performed intense austerities on one foot (*eka-pāda-āsana*), meditating on "the *Īśvara* of the universe" (*jagad-Īśvara*). Eventually, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā all appeared before him. Confused, he told them that he had supplicated "the one *Bhagavān.* " Why had three of them come?

Smiling, they replied, "We are that one!" This multiplicity-in—

oneness is the Vaiṣṇava form of monotheism.

Nonetheless, if one has been entrusted with the *dharma* of safeguarding the parameters of a sect's theological speci cs, as is the case with Jīva, one must rise up to establish the bona des of

one's tradition in accordance with the methodologies and

epistemologies of one's time, lest it be belittled by opposing schools

or ridiculed as emotional foolishness. And the Gauḍīya tradition, while honoring and relishing all the divine manifestations, is

entrusted by its founder, *Śrī* Caitanya, with spreading the sweetness of *rāgānugā bhakti* to *Śrī* Kṛṣṇa as the highest expression of personal love of God (a goal deemed not only to be the summum bonum of

life and human existence, but the solution to all human problems).

Perhaps we can consider this feature of Hindu *bhakti* a type of eclectic sectarianism. Jīva and the other *Gosvāmīs* perceive their dedication to making these teachings of *bhakti* available in accordance with the scholastic and intellectual criteria of their day as the highest welfare work for human well-being. Apart from the

belief that the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* produces the highest possible ecstasy attainable by the *ātman,* these *bhakti* teachings are,

of course, embedded within the generic *yoga* perspective that the ultimate cause of the su ering of all embodied beings stems from the pursuit of desires pertaining to the body/mind temporal self, as

we have discussed. Teaching about such things is their solution to

su ering and the human condition. But while Vaiṣṇavas accept the

standard *yogic* notion that the only ultimate solution is knowledge of the true *ātman* self, they additionally identify the even more fundamental cause of su ering as aversion toward *Īśvara*. The *Gosvāmīs* are thus entrusted to present these teachings—especially the unparalleled sweetness of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*—as their contribution to ultimate human welfare. Hence the enormous investment Jīva and Rūpa devoted to their writings and to justifying their prioritization

of Kṛṣṇa by recourse to reason and scriptural engagement, where they could easily have followed the life of other *bābās* (ascetics) of their day and simply immersed themselves in their *japa*, *kīrtana*, and *pūjās* in solitude. This is their service.

Before returning to our scholastic and sectarian questions

pertaining to the source *Īśvara*, let us linger on this for another moment: from the point of view of theologians like Jīva,

scholasticism itself is perceived as a spiritual service to humanity.

Even though *Īśvara* is beyond the grasp of the intellect, formulating coherent and systematic theologies is seen as a service for those who

need some degree of rationality to underpin their foray into the transrational. Intellectuality, scholasticism, or the articulation of lineage-speci c theologies and practices need not be, in and of themselves, spiritually oppressive, limiting, or sti ing to spiritual reality, as they are sometimes depicted, or somehow blockages to or overlays over the experience of unfettered Truth. Those

intellectually inclined need at least a preliminary rational platform

from which to take that leap of faith into a domain beyond reason.

This is all the more so since *bhakti* traditions are often condescendingly portrayed as emotional religiosity for the populous

masses devoid of any intellectual substance (and this was so even in the sixteenth century in Jīva's time, as in the eleventh century in Rāmānuja's before him).101 In addition to this, certain scholastics may be entrusted with preserving the logic, rationale, and time-tested value of lineage-speci c rituals, practices, and protocols lest these become diluted in the name of eclecticism. All this is the *dharma* of the theologian, which, like any *dharma*, becomes *bhakti* when performed with devotion and o ered to *Īśvara*. *Bhakti*, as we know from the *Gītā* (for instance, see IX.27), entails o ering whatever one possesses and whatever assets one is endowed with to *Īśvara*. Thus, there are those with intellectual gifts and inclinations, who are moved by their love and devotion to the form of *Īśvara* with which they are enamored to attempt to articulate the

superexcellence of their beloved and justify their devotion in

accordance with the standard sources of knowledge of the time

(such as sense perception, reason, and a consistent interpretation of

the sacred texts). 102

This is what Jīva is doing here and what others have done for other *bhakti* traditions, such as the brilliant scholar-practitioner Abhinavagupta for Kaśmir Śaivism, and Rāmānuja for Śrī

Vaiṣṇavism, and so forth. Reason and argument, then, like art,

dance, poetry, or anything else—indeed, like the modest leaf, fruit,

ower, or water of *Gītā* IX.26—can be o ered in devotion to one's

beloved *Īśvara* as *bhakti*. With Jīva as our exemplar, then, the following discussion grants us a glimpse at the concerns of one such

scholastic practitioner in the sixteenth century, who had been

entrusted with articulating a theology centered on Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* that could form the bedrock for the edgling Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition

that was beginning to de ne itself after the passing away of *Śrī*

Caitanya and thus needed to nd scriptural authority to substantiate

the tradition's exclusive focus on Kṛṣṇa as Supreme *Īśvara*.

Drawing from sources long predating the Common Era, the Purāṇa tradition develops into two or perhaps three basic streams:

those holding Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa to be the Ultimate *Īśvara,* the Vaiṣṇavas, and those holding Śiva as Ultimate *Īśvara*, the Śaivites. 103

Overlapping with the latter, and sometimes subsumed within it, a later Śākta stream emerged in literary form (but also with roots in

the hoary past), some major expressions of which hold the Goddess

to be the Ultimate source Being. 104 We have painted all this with very broad, simplistic strokes here, since our purpose is just to give

a avor of the landscape within which the *Bhāgavata* is negotiating its position. There are all sorts of cross-fertilizing permutations of some of the elements noted above. 105

The position taken by the various sects on such issues is not assumed but must be substantiated by scriptural reference for a lineage to be taken seriously in the vibrant heterogeneous landscape

of the *bhakti* traditions. Summarizing brie y, in his rst *Sandarbha*, the *Tattva* (*anu* 17), where he defends the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa over other forms of *Īśvara*, Jīva enlists the support of other Purāṇas, beginning with a sequence of verses in the *Matsya Purāṇa*. In this text, we nd the Purāṇa corpus divided according to the *guṇas*, with those glorifying Viṣṇu (Hari) considered to be Purāṇas associated with *sattva*, and those Śiva, with *tamas*.106 In another Purāṇa, the *Padma* (CCXXXVI. 18–21), the speci c names of the eighteen Purāṇas107 are allocated to their respective *guṇas*,

with the *Bhāgavata* and other *Vaiṣṇava* Purāṇas placed in the *sattva* category, and the Śaivite ones placed in the *tamas* one. Part of the reason for these associations, in the larger epic and Purāṇa framework, is that Hari/Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa is typically associated with *sattva* and the maintenance of the universe, maintenance being a quality of *sattva*, and Śiva with its destruction, a quality of *tamas*.108

Since *sattva* is a prerequisite for knowledge (see, for example, *Gītā* XIV.17), Jīva feels justi ed in asserting the supremacy of the

Purāṇas in the *sattva* category. He can now quote the *sāttvic Bhāgavata* itself with less risk of circularity: *Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. There is one Supreme Being who directs these for the purpose of creation, maintenance, and destruction of this universe. He is named Hari [Viṣṇu], Viriṇci [Brahmā], and Hara

[Śiva]. From these, the ultimate good is derived from the One whose

form is *sattva* [that is, Viṣṇu]. 109 [Just as, for the performance of Vedic ritual,] smoke is higher than wood, and re is higher than that, as it lies at the essence of the [rituals prescribed in the] three Vedas, 110 [so] *rajas* is higher than *tamas*, and *sattva* is higher than that, as it bestows the vision of *Brahman*. In the beginning, the sages worshipped *Bhagavān* Viṣṇu, who is pure *sattva* (*viśuddha-sattva*). 111

Those who follow their example are eligible for liberation. (I.2.23–

25) Having argued for the primacy of *Īśvara*, the personal Godhead, over His derivative nonpersonal powers on the basis of Vedānta

texts, and then advocated the supremacy of Viṣṇu as ultimate *Īśvara*

over other forms of *Īśvara* on the basis of the Purāṇa texts, Jīva had one further step. The Vaiṣṇava schools di er as to whether Viṣṇu is

the Ultimate and Supreme *Bhagavān*, who periodically incarnates into the world in various forms, one of which is Kṛṣṇa, or whether

Kṛṣṇa is the source Being and Viṣṇu a derivative Being manifest from Him for the purpose of the creation and maintenance of the cosmic order (as the *Paramātman* touched upon previously).

Following the opinion of the *Mahābhārata* epic, *Hairivaṃśa*, 112 and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the former position is held by the older Vaiṣṇava sects dominant in the south, noteworthy among which are the tenth-to

eleventh-century Rāmānuja and twelfth-century Madhva traditions,

whose theologies we know paved the way for and signi cantly

underpin the Gauḍīya one. The latter position, based on the

Bhāgavata Purāṇa and *Bhagavad Gītā*, surfaces most conspicuously across the north of the subcontinent in the sixteenth century,

particularly in the form of Jīva's own school founded by Caitanya,

as well as the spiritually cognate tradition stemming from Caitanya's contemporary Vallabha, the founder of the *puṣṭi mārga*. 113 In addition to this identi cation of Kṛṣṇa as the First Cause of all causes, these latter schools especially stress the unsurpassed nature of Kṛṣṇa's sweetness compared with all other *Īśvara* forms.114 Once again, all schools ultimately hold both Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu—and Śiva— to be manifestations of the same transcendent "One Supreme Being"

who has one form but appears in many forms (X.40.7), so in terms

of who came rst, the di erence is something of a plant-and-seed situation and one mostly of scholarly concern.

The crucial verse in the *Bhāgavata* used by the Kṛṣṇa theologians to justify this preeminence of Kṛṣṇa over all other manifestations of

the Godhead is I.3.18. Situated after a number of verses listing Viṣṇu's previous incarnations, this verse states: "These [other

incarnations] are partial derived incarnations (*aṁśa,* or *kalā*), but Kṛṣṇa is *Bhagavān*, God, Himself (*Kṛṣṇas-tu Bhagavān svayam*).” *Aṁśa* means a “portion” or “partial incarnation.” Similar to the

relationship between God the Father and God the Son and God the

Holy Spirit in the Christian trinity, the sense of the term is that Kṛṣṇa, as the Supreme Godhead, can maintain His own presence,

while simultaneously manifesting some aspect of Himself elsewhere

in a separate and distinct presence (or any number of presences).

Those secondary or derivative manifestations exhibit a part but not

the full characteristics or potency of the source Being (the term *kalā*

has similar connotations).115 This concept is very important for understanding the di erence between polytheism, where beings are

completely separate and more or less equal ontological entities, and

the plethora of divine presences in Kṛṣṇa monotheism, which can be

thought of as an unlimitedly proli c parallel of the Christian trinity

concept: a “multiplicity in one,” so to speak.

This verse becomes something of a *mahāvākya,* a “most important expression” or pivotal, foundational statement, 116 for the theology of the Kṛṣṇa sects: all other incarnations are *aṁśas* or *kalās*, partial incarnations, but Kṛṣṇa is *Bhagavān* Himself, the original Being and source of the other incarnations. The importance of I.3.28 for the *Bhāgavata* tradition cannot be overestimated, and it overrides all other con icting statements: the commentators consider it to be a *paribhāṣā sūtra,* an explanatory assertion that, while occurring in only one verse, illuminates the entire text, like a lamp that, although situated in only one place, illuminates an entire house. And, again

relevant here, and just as was the case with the *Vedānta Sūtras*, since all the Purāṇas are deemed compiled by sage Vyāsa, as we will see

in his tale, with the *Bhāgavata* as his grand nale, so to speak, it is consequently taken by Jīva as Vyāsa's nal word not only on all such issues of personal versus nonpersonal modalities of *Brahman*, but also on the hierarchies among *Īśvaras*. And the *Bhāgavata* promotes Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme causal *Īśvara*.

We must stress once more that while this type of argumentation

is clearly sectarian, the *bhakti* traditions are inclusivistic sectarianism, not exclusivistic. The *Bhāgavata*, for example, extols Śiva, using similar categories it elsewhere directs to Viṣṇu: I know

you, Rudra [Śiva] are the Lord, the undivided *Brahman*, beyond Śiva and Śakti117 who are the seed and womb of the universe. You are *Bhagavān* who, like a spider with its web, playfully create, maintain, and destroy this universe in the forms of Śiva and Śakti, who are one essence. (IV.6.42–43) This is typical of Hinduism, and examples are ubiquitous. In the *Mahābhārata* epic, for example, Viṣṇu says to Śiva: "He who knows You, knows Me. He who follows You, follows

Me. There is not the slightest di erence between Us both. Let there

be no judgment otherwise" (*Mokṣadharma* CCCXLII.233). The verse

is repeated verbatim earlier, adding: "Their reality (*sattva*) is one, their forms are two" (CCCXLI.16). While the *Bhāgavata* generally

does not waver about who is the ultimate source Supreme Being, 118

it allows those devoted to Śiva to perceive and eulogize Śiva as not

only the Supreme Being, but even as the source of Viṣṇu (VIII.7.23),

the creator, protector, and destroyer of the universe (IV.6.42–43), the originator of the *guṇas* and everything in existence (VIII.7.21–

35), whose abode is inaccessible even to Viṣṇu. The eulogy to Śiva

of the *prajāpatis* (VIII.7.21 .) could have come right out of the Purāṇas that prioritize Śiva—the *Śiva*, *Liṅga*, and *Skandha Purāṇas*.

Ultimately, the *Bhāgavata* allows everyone to follow their own devotional inclinations: “One should worship the Supreme Being in

accordance with the preference of one’s mind” (XI.3.48). And,

reciprocally, it allows that the Supreme Being assumes forms not only according to functions (Śiva, as we know, is typically accorded

the role of the destroyer in the overall Purāṇic schema), but also in

accordance with the particular desires of individual devotees: “You

assume whatever form Your devotees meditate upon” (III.9.11);

“Whatever forms please Your devotees, are pleasing to You, O Lord”

(III.24.31). So this sectarianism is of an eclectic and inclusivistic nature, typical of the *bhakti* of the Purāṇas.

Īśvara, Pure *Bhakti*, and Motivated *Bhakti*

Continuing thematically with the di erences among the various

Īśvara forms, another way of di erentiating between the *bhakti* performed for Kṛṣṇa and that performed for some of the other divine

manifestations, according to the *Bhāgavata* tradition, is that since Kṛṣṇa is pure *sattva*, those who seek the ful llment of *prakṛti*-related desires are naturally more likely to approach and o er *bhakti* to those other forms of the Divine, which are associated with the ful llment of those desires. We know from the *Gītā* (XVIII.9 and 23) that *sattva* is associated with freedom from desire and detachment from the fruit of action; *rajas* with desire and attachment to the fruit of desire (indeed, the word for desire, *rāga*, comes

from the same root); and *tamas* with apathy toward the ful llment of desire in general (XVIII.24–25). In the overall Hindu hierarchization of divine

plenitude, di erent types of beings, not all of whom are divine or

even benevolent, become associated with di erent modes of

worship and the attainment of di erent material goals: Those

desiring liberation reject the ghastly forms of [other] powerful

beings[119] and, free from envy, worship the peaceful manifestations of Nārāyaṇa. Those whose natures and characteristics are *rājasic* and *tāmasic*, desiring o spring, power, and opulence, worship the celestial beings, ancestors, and ghosts, *etc.* (I.2.26–27) This principle is illustrated in the *Bhāgavata* in the story of Vṛka. This demon approaches Nārada and, upon asking him which of the great Deities is most easily propitiated, is informed: "Worship Lord Śiva, and you

will quickly attain success. He can be easily pleased or easily angered by a small amount of either merit or fault" (X.88.15).

Nārada points out that the great demon Rāvaṇa who kidnapped Sītā

in the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic attained his power from worshipping Śiva, as did numerous other demons.[120] The point here is that those with *tāmasic* malintentions tend to worship forms of Śiva, who, being highly benevolent and easily grati ed, accepts such worship, where Viṣṇu, being pure *sattva*, would not (generally[121]), nor would His worship likely attract those in *tamas*. Vṛka proceeded to worship Śiva through ghastly austerities—o ering the esh from his own

limbs and preparing to sever his own head—and did indeed attain a

tāmasic boon—the ability to kill anyone by merely laying a hand on that person (X.88). Since the preamble to this story narrated by Śuka to Parīkṣit amply illustrates the *Bhāgavata*'s perspective on the di erentiation among

Divine Beings and their appeal to di erent types of worshippers, it is worth quoting at length: Those among the

gods, demons, and mortals who worship the austere Śiva are often

wealthy and lead a life of enjoyment. But this is not the case with

those who worship Hari even though He is the Lord of Lakṣmī, the

Goddess of Fortune.… The end results are di erent for the worshippers of these two Lords, whose personalities are so

opposite.… Śiva is always associated with His *śakti* powers. He is enveloped by the *guṇas*, with their three characteristics. 122 … So anyone having recourse [to Śiva] enjoys the acquisition of all riches.

Hari, however, is untouched by the *guṇas*. He is the Supreme Person beyond *prakṛti*. He is the witness, the seer of everything. One who worships Him becomes free from the *guṇas* … your grandfather, King Yudhiṣṭhira … asked Kṛṣṇa the same question [you, Parīkṣit, have asked].… *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa replied as follows … "I will deprive the person whom I favor of his wealth. At this, his own family members abandon the person who has become poverty-stricken and a icted by su ering. When his endeavors come to nothing, and he

becomes despondent in his attempts to [gain] wealth, then I bestow

my favor on him, once he has formed friendship with those devoted

to Me.… But, because I am so hard to worship, people reject Me and

worship other gods." (X.88.1–10) Hopefully the point is clear: the idea that the Supreme *Īśvara* assumes di erent personae to cater to the di erent inclinations and desires of humans would be accepted

by most *bhakti* sects. The *Bhāgavata* allows Śiva Himself to state that those who have attained equanimity of perception "do not see even

a speck of di erence between He Himself and Viṣṇu." But those

with more intense desires perfectly naturally worship the Being who

can most quickly ful ll those desires (as indicated in the *Gītā* IV.12), and Śiva is supremely muni cent and easily satis ed, *asutoṣa*. 123 The *Bhāgavata* certainly recognizes that Śiva is the same *Īśvara* who can bestow liberation (VIII.7.22), that there are realized *yogīs* dedicated to Him who are liberated124 (IV.6.45–46), and that there are "*gurus* delighting in the *ātman* who contemplate Śiva in their hearts"

(VIII.7.33). So clearly it does not consider all of His devotees to be

motivated by mundane *prakṛtic* needs. But it does associate at least

most of His followers with those who still have some level of interest in the enjoyments of *prakṛti*.

We will no more than again cursorily note here that some forms

of Śiva devotion, such as the Kaśmir Śaivism of the Siddha tradition,

promote a goal of complete identi cation with and the eventual

reimmersion of the *ātman* into its potential and inherent Śiva nature, from which vantage point it can, in fact, enjoy the spectacle

of *prakṛti*. After all, in Kaśmir Śaivism, *prakṛti* is the *citi-śākti* energy of the Divine—pure vibrational consciousness—so for this tradition

it is not *prakṛti* that should be renounced, but the sense of self as an enjoyer separate from Śiva. Once *prakṛti* is fully and actually realized as nondi erent from Śiva, what is there to renounce? Such

Śākta schools are philosophically rich and coherent traditions, with

considerable theological sophistication. Engaging a robust form of Śiva *bhakti* as method, they promote one of their ultimate goals precisely as the enjoyment of the creative spectacle of *prakṛti* once the practitioner has transcended the limitations of personal ego, *ahaṅkāra*, and realized his or her own true Śiva nature (*svarūpa*).

But this is not the goal sought by the Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* of Jīva's tradition. Of course he does not reject the soteriological possibility

of such liberation, as becoming one with Śiva can certainly be accommodated in *Bhāgavata* ontology, given the Vaiṣṇava

equivalent in one or two of the ve basic types of liberation we have discussed (*ekatvam* with *sārūpya* avorings). But the reason Jīva deems any form of liberation from the various options

discussed previously—or their Śaivite parallels—to be of no interest

to true *bhaktas*, even if available, is that they do not facilitate eternal service to *Īśvara*. Service is the sign of true love. And as the other main Śaivite tradition, Śaiva Siddhānta, would agree, eternal

service requires an eternal distinction between *Īśvara* as object of *bhakti* and the worshipful *bhakta*. According to the *Bhāgavata*, the

worship of the pure forms of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are attractive to those who are without desire to enjoy *prakṛti* from any vantage point whatsoever (other than by means of o ering *prakṛti* in love and devotion to their beloved). Such *bhaktas* aspire for what for them is the ultimate perfection of *bhakti* free from all personal motives of enjoyment. This perfection is service to the beloved that culminates in an eternal relationship with *Bhagavān* assuming the form of their preference in the trans- *prakṛtic* realms within *Brahman* itself, Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka.

Again, this partiality or preference does not imply that Vaiṣṇavas

would deny the possibility of the speci c type of liberation proposed

by Kaśmir Śaivism or any other such tradition, since, as we have discussed, Vaiṣṇavas accept a parallel type of liberation: Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* too can merge into Kṛṣṇa (as we will see in the Agha story).

Why not, then, a parallel option for Śiva *bhaktas*?125 But since, in the *Bhāgavata*, Śiva is accepted as an eternal transcendent Being abiding in His

own abode with His liberated *bhaktas*, Jīva's form of *bhakti* nds a closer Śaivite spiritual cognate with Śaiva Siddhānta, since the equivalent of *sārūpya* liberation in that tradition is a state where the liberated *ātman* attains a divine form and qualities identical to Śiva's but distinct from His. Their relationship is both a dualism—as

here the soul retains its individuality—and a oneness, since it is inseparably united with Śiva with the bond of love.126 It is such love shared between an individual soul and an eternal *Īśvara* that Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* seek.

Having said all this, we have applied a Kṛṣṇa-centered lens for our case study to exemplify with some depth one expression of

bhakti, but we must in fairness note that other Purāṇas express di erent hierarchies and relationships on such issues: certainly the

three main Śaivite Purāṇas, the Ś *iva* and the *Liṅga*, especially, and also the *Skanda*, all promote Śiva's ultimate supremacy over Viṣṇu in various passages,127 as does the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* on behalf of the Goddess. 128 Much of this type of sectarian rhetoric from all sides, Vaiṣṇava and Śaivite, is not likely to appeal to those who are

not already deeply committed to a speci c sect. But, by way of a conclusion to all this, the various Purāṇic sects do accept and respect all forms of *Īśvara*. The sectarian hierarchization among the various *Īśvara* forms that becomes important to the scholastic theologians of the various traditions can be seen as expressions of their intense devotion, *bhakti*, for their own *iṣṭa-devatā*. It also re ects their duties as lineage bearers to justify this devotion according to the standard epistemological methodologies of their

day for the sake of their followers and for the intellectual dignity of

their traditions. But most of all, from a *bhakti* perspective, all this can perhaps be best relished as something of a *līlā*, divine play, among the traditions re ecting the playful exchanges among the

divinities themselves described in the various stories of the di erent

Purāṇas as manifestations of what all agree is the one Supreme Being. The bottom line is that *Īśvara* will bestow faith in whatever form is attractive to the *bhakta* (*Gītā* VII.21), and ultimately, if that faith becomes pure, un inching, and all-consuming, *Īśvara* will appear to the faithful *bhakta* in that form: “You appear in that very form in which they contemplate You, O glorious One” (*Bhāgavata* III.9.11).

Materialistic Religiosity

Given the division of the Purāṇas according to the three *guṇas* noted in the *Matsya* and *Padma Purāṇas* discussed above, the question could now be raised as to why the various Purāṇas and, we can add,

Vedic sacred texts bother to prescribe forms of *bhakti* religiosity to cater to ful lling the desires of those in *rajas* and *tamas* in the rst place. Isn’t this sending mixed messages? As with any *yoga*

worldview, and indeed (almost) all Indic soteriological systems, the

very cause of bondage is desire, 129 and thus desire must be

renounced for liberation to become possible.130 So don’t scriptural prescriptions catering to ful lling desire counter the spiritual well-being of those following them and, even worse, do so insidiously since they are embedded in sacred texts and thus claim the aura of being sacrosanct (as Nārada suggests in the Tale of Vyāsa within)?

We can also mention here that in addition to the various *bhakti* paths associated with di erent forms of *Īśvara* in the Purāṇas, the older Vedic texts are laden with prescriptions for rites to the celestial beings (*devas*)131 promoting various material boons. These rites are also focused on ful lling desire and require a type of *bhakti* to the *devas* for their ful llment. Here too the same basic question remains: Since Kṛṣṇa is the *Vedas* (*Gītā* IX.17), and their knower (XV.15), and seems to condone Vedic sacri ce (III.10–14), why did He bother to compose them, only to then urge Arjuna to renounce

their “ owery words” (II.42–43)? 132

The *Bhāgavata* takes the view that full renunciation of self-centered desire is not (except in occasional grace-related contexts)

instantaneous. One needs to gradually progress through the *guṇas* by discipline and sacri ce. As the *Gītā* informs us, this usually takes lifetimes (VI.45). People cannot be expected to renounce desire

overnight (*Gītā* III.26). Thus, the religious rites and boons associated with non- *sattva* modes of *bhakti* may indeed be legitimizing the ful llment of desires, but they nonetheless do so embedded in

disciplinary regimens that prescribe the worship of a form of *Īśvara*, or at least of some higher celestial power, and that require some form of discipline and austerity for their accomplishment. We know

from the *Yoga Sūtras* that from the performance of discipline (*tapas*), and surrender to *Īśvara* (*praṇidhāna*), the *kleśas*, impurities —

including desire—are weakened (II.1–2). By o ering various desire—

related boons that nonetheless come with this type of discreet price

tag, these texts thereby entice those in the lower *guṇas* to at least begin this process of discipline and ("mixed") *bhakti* to some entity

higher than themselves, as this will eventually lead toward puri cation and consequent ultimate well-being. In the words of the

Bhāgavata: The Vedic utterances conceal their meaning. They prescribe ritual activity (*karma*) for the purpose of becoming free from *karma* just as medicine [is covered by something sweet] for the healing of children. If an ignorant person with uncontrolled senses does not follow the injunctions of the Vedas, he attains death after

death [in *saṁsāra*] because of the *adharma* incurred from forbidden actions. The material fruits o ered in the Vedas are for the purpose

of attracting [people to prescribed actions]. And if one [eventually]

follows the prescriptions of the Vedas without attachment, and

o ers them to *Īśvara,* that person [eventually] attains the perfection of being free from *karma*. (XI.3.44) This, then, can perhaps be considered a form of *upāya*, skillful means: the promise of *prakṛti-related boons coaxes embodied beings toward dharma, righteous actions, that are regulated and connected to higher beings. Thus, one is enticed away from non- dharma that will simply perpetuate the lower destinations of saṁsāra (even if, as with Vṛka, one starts from a place of adharma and deepest tamas). Satisfying desires under these regulated conditions, rather than observing no restrictions whatsoever, one begins one's ascent through the guṇas.*

In time, as one approaches sattva, and thus its qualities of insight and wisdom, one eventually realizes one is seeking to overcome

su ering by ful lling desires, but it is actually those very desires themselves that are the cause of su ering and bondage (Gītā V.22, XIV.17; Yoga Sūtras II.15 .). At this point, renunciation from desire becomes obvious and liberating.

To conclude this section on Īśvara, in terms of the most suitable object of bhakti, then, the culmination of all these lines of reasoning for the Bhāgavata tradition is that "one desiring freedom from fear, should hear about, glorify, and remember Hari, who is Bhagavān, Īśvara, the soul of everything" (II.1.5). It is Kṛṣṇa, as Ultimate Being, who is ultimately both the source and goal of all religious activity:

Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] is the ultimate goal of the Veda, Vāsudeva is the

ultimate goal of ritual sacri ces, Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of yoga, Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of actions. Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of knowledge, Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of

austerity (tapas), Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of dharma, Vāsudeva

is the ultimate goal. (I.2.28–29)[133]

Or, in the words of the Gītā: "After many births, a wise person

takes refuge in Me, knowing that ‘Vāsudeva is everything.’ Such a

great soul is very rare indeed” (VII.19).

Concluding Re ections

Some Academic Considerations

Readers unfamiliar with Hindu devotion will be struck by how

personal the processes of bhakti are. That is to say, just as in worldly love a airs in the realm of prakṛti, the lover rst encounters and feels a seed of attraction for and then ultimately falls in love with

the beauty, qualities, acts, personality, and so forth of the beloved,

such is the case with bhakti. The encounter in the case of bhakti yoga occurs between the devoted seeker and one of the multifarious

manifestations and activities of Īśvara as depicted in the two epics and the vast Purāṇa corpus and its derivative literatures. And this,

in Jīva’s case, means Kṛṣṇa as encountered in the narratives of His

incarnation recorded in the Bhāgavata.

A related issue this presents to those unfamiliar with the great Hindu divinities is a corollary of such personal speci city. Western

readers, whether with theistic or nontheistic orientations, will in either case usually be responding to Abrahamic notions when

envisioning the ultimate nature of God—the portrayals in the

monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Jahweh/Jehovah is often construed as a personal but distant and opaque Father-like

gure beyond human categories and

comprehension (we speak of God the Father here: of course, Jesus,

depicted as the son of God, is extremely personal and approachable

for Christians). There are references in the Old Testament to prophets who were awarded a personal vision of God the Father,1

juxtaposed with other references suggesting that God cannot be

perceived by humans, 2 but we are a orded few detailed visuals co-relatable with much that is humanly describable (visions typically using the language of re and splendor, as in Ezekiel 1.1). God remains transcendent to the limitations of human senses and hence concise description (other than through absolutist characteristics such as "almighty," "all-knowing," and the like).

There are, in fact, parallels to this in Hinduism. The same tension

between special souls being awarded a vision of God and less

quali ed souls overwhelmed by His majesty being unable to

perceive Him even while in His presence occurs in, for example, the

Mokṣadharma section of the Mahābhārata epic (śānti parva 336–38).3

Yet whether any individual person is eligible to perceive God or not,

the Purāṇas and epics are replete with detailed imagery as to what

many of the forms of Īśvara and Īśvarī are held to look like when manifest to human vision. Indeed, to a great extent these texts owe

their own literary raison d'être precisely to encoding and preserving

the narratives of their incarnations in the world and other such personal involvement with human a airs.

When encountering such Purāṇic and epic depictions of God,

which are highly visual and descriptive in language and conceptual

structures familiar to the human mind, the default interpretative category most Western readers have at their disposal, and so

re exively draw from so as to make sense of these descriptions, is

that of anthropomorphic myth. In other words, the characteristics associated with the various Īśvara forms in the Purāṇas are understandably held to constitute a projection of human qualities and activities onto the Supreme Being who is in actuality beyond human comprehension, with some superhuman ourishes to indicate this supremacy. This is all the more so since the

cosmographical context of these texts—for example, the world of lower celestials with whom humans interact in various ways—is, in

fact, cognate with the Greek, Roman, Celtic, Germanic, and other Indo-European pantheons, as indeed are the gods themselves—

whom we have thus far referred to as celestials (devas in Sanskrit). [4]

With the spread of monotheistic Christianity, the preexisting

Indo-European religions of Europe—including the cognate stories

from the Greek, Roman, Germanic, and similarly derived epics,

sagas, and other such classical sources—have long been

overwhelmed and relegated to the category of classical myth (with

some selective appropriations[5]*). We are thus challenged, in the Bhāgavata, to comprehend the emergence of a theistic tradition, which retains rather than eradicates the cognate theophanies and cosmologies of the old Indo-European world that remain preserved in India and combines these with the manifestation of a*

monotheistic transcendent Deity. As God the Father Kṛṣṇa claims

primal causal dominion and supremacy over everything, a dominion

extending most especially over what becomes relegated to lower-level (Indo-European) gods. Indra and the hosts of devas do not get brushed aside as "false gods" in Hinduism (or Buddhism, for that matter), but they are relegated to the dimensions of svarga, the higher celestial realms of prakṛti, although still subject to its laws of karma and the temporality of material embodiment. They too are ātmans playing out their (exceptionally good) karma in the more subtle dimensions of saṁsāra. 6 Their nearest Christian trans-human parallels might be the angels, seraphims, and cherubims (indeed, the winged and musically skilled celestial gandharvas are similar in this

regard7). Īśvara is transcendent to these dimensions and their inhabitants, 8 abiding in what corresponds to the Kingdom of God in the Purāṇas—the transcendent realms of Goloka for Kṛṣṇa,

Vaikuṇṭha for Viṣṇu, Śiva-loka for Śiva, and Devī-loka for the

Goddess. 9 This is why the transcendent forms of Īśvara should not be

confounded with the great Indo-European celestials (gods with a small "g") or with notions of polytheism, any more than God and His angels express polytheism in the Abrahamic traditions, and why

we have stressed that Hinduism's dominant—by which I intend

transregional and pan-Hindu—expressions (other than in the very

earliest literary period10) are either monotheistic (personal) or monistic (nonpersonal).

But most important of all, a further essential feature to keep in

mind if one is to understand the power of bhakti is that these transcendent manifestations of Īśvara are considered real and actual by their devotees. These Beings are supreme personalities with

forms, qualities, and activities eternally existent beyond the realm of

physically accessible prakṛti. Likewise, the accounts of Their interactions with Their bhaktas and incarnations into the world are also not deemed mythological. Myth means not historically true.

The stories pertaining to Kṛṣṇa are presented as historically real, not

myth by the Bhāgavata—as is the case with the Īśvara manifestations in the other Purāṇas—and accepted as such by their bhaktas. While, as in Christianity, Īśvara may send a representative to the world (usually conceived of as an aṁśa or kalā, "partial incarnation," such as Vyāsa, 11 rather than as a son gure), God the Father, whom it should be clear by now is identi ed in the Bhāgavata as Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, and, in terms of God the Mother, forms of Devī, the Goddess, can also personally directly appear in the world. This

occurs either by these divinities bestowing visions—in the literal sense of manifesting before Their bhaktas as visually perceivable presence—as we will nd in the Tale of Prince Dhruva—or by

assuming forms and entering into the world for prolonged periods

resembling a conventional lifetime. This is the avatāra, literally "one who descends" (a term problematically translated as

"incarnation").12 It is the deeds and activities of these avatāras performed in the world as recorded in the two epics and the Purāṇas

that underpin the devotional practices of most of the major bhakti traditions and the bulk of its literary corpus.

So, as we prepare to read parts 2 and 3 of this volume, our main

challenge when striving to understand bhakti on its own terms is to keep in mind that these stories are not considered myth in

premodern India, but sacred history. Purāṇa means "that which

occurred in the past," and, likewise, itihāsa, epic, translates as "this is what happened." Modern theorizing on the study of religion has

either imposed reductionistic categories of interpretation on

religious narratives of this sort or sought some kind of perennial core. Reductionism entails rejecting the face-value claims made by a

tradition, which are seen as expressions of prerational, prescienti c,

mythological thinking, and instead strives to impose some modern

rational explanation for why religions exist, make the historical claims they do, and wield the power they exert. Their essence is thus "reduced" to some sort of natural, rationally explainable—as opposed to supernatural—cause. Perennialism also rejects the surface-level claims and stories of religious traditions but makes an

e ort to retain a supernatural element in the form of a common transcultural hidden spiritual core. Like a perennial ower that

reappears consistently every year, this core is deemed to surface consistently—"perennially"—across traditions, once one digs behind

the clutter of superimposed mythological trappings.

So, for example, in a reductionist approach, a claimed vision of

Kṛṣṇa might be interpreted as nothing other than some

psychological projections from the subconscious (as with Freud), or

the in uence of mundane social forces on the psyche (Durkheim and

Weber), or concocted by social elite groups to preserve political or

economic power over other social groups (Marx). For such theorists,

religions are consciously or unconsciously "invented" by humans,

created to serve social, political, or psychological purposes or other such mundane needs in the real world. 13 Perennialism, in contrast, which is prepared to allow a spiritual core to religious phenomenon and resists such materialistic reductionism, ends up imposing a reductionism of its own. Although committed to acknowledging some transcendent element to religion, perennialists typically jettison all surface-layer narratives (such as the stories of the activities of Īśvara's incarnations) in the quest of some perennial core buried beneath them. This core is deemed to emerge consistently across religions, irrespective of time and place, once excavated by the perennialist savant. It is typically construed as some form of a monistic essence—understandably, as monism is the most conveniently appropriated metaphysics for anyone seeking a baseline generic commonality from the comparison of religions. The stories themselves are deemed later accretions added as concessions for the unenlightened superstitious masses, or are at best accepted as metaphor, symbol, or archetype of some higher Truth.14 All this is an enormous domain in its own right, foundational to, and indeed constitutive of, the academic study of religion, but for our present purposes, both these types of treatments violate the claims such texts make about themselves, albeit in very di erent ways and underpinned by opposing intentions. (Strenski, 2006, likes to call the "perennialists" "caretakers of religion," and reductionists "undertakers of religion"!) In any event, as something of a reaction

against such interpretative impositions from the elite ivory towers of

Western scholarship on non-Western traditions, with many of these

theories re ecting the Eurocentric, Christian, colonial, and racist attitudes of their times, [15] an academic approach to the study of religion, called "phenomenology," emerged among certain

intellectuals. Despite meaning di erent things to di erent scholars

in the history of the term, phenomenology typically strives to refrain

from imposing Western post-Enlightenment so-called rational modes

of interpretation on the truth claims of other traditions, often far distant in space, time, and context, and strives, rather, to consider

them on their own terms. This approach does not entail necessarily accepting traditional claims as historically or scienti cally true, but

it does entail making at least a serious commitment to bracketing one's own beliefs and presuppositions (even as this is impossible). It

attempts to suspend judgments of veracity or falsity and refrains from evaluating traditions based on their compatibility with modern

categories of knowledge. This is intended to allow the traditions to

narrate their own tale and speak in their own voice through their

own categories as "phenomena" in their own right. This is the

approach I have adopted throughout, as outlined in the

introduction.

If we wish to gain any level of empathy, phenomenological or

other, as to the power of bhakti, it is useful to keep in mind that nowhere in the sixteen thousand verses of the Bhāgavata does the text claim to be myth, metaphor, or symbol. Nor is any such

suggestion made in the approximately four hundred thousand verses

of the entire Purāṇa corpus, the one-hundred-thousand-verse

Mahābhārata, and the twenty-four-thousand-verse Rāmāyaṇa. In fact, when metaphoric readings are intended, they are clearly

indicated, as we will see in the Allegory of the Forest and the Allegory of King Purañjana in part 2. [16] Thanks to the intellectual conditionings we have inherited from post-Enlightenment

presuppositions (another vast and interminable topic in its own

right), we would do well to be aware of our own cultural

presuppositions and intellectual embeddedness and bear in mind

that most modern heirs to the Western Enlightenment do not read

these stories in the same way the tradition-sensitive bhaktas do.

Ultimately, this is an epistemological issue. Epistemology deals

with the sources and means through which knowledge is acquired.

Brie y stated, prior to the Enlightenment, the Christian Bible had been deemed the ultimate source of knowledge in most mainstream

contexts in Christendom for the best part of a millennium and a half

(despite its many dissenters). The Enlightenment displaced scripture in favor of human reason as the highest source of knowledge. The

“light” of reason was deemed epistemologically paramount. Despite

dissenters here too, we now inhabit an intellectual world where the claims of scripture are subject to the scrutiny of reason and empirical data, at least in most scholarly circles. Even as most thinkers in academic circles are fully aware of the myth of objectivity and the limitations of reason and the empirical method, they are still considered the de facto safest epistemological methods. Few are willing to countenance a return to what most would consider a faith-based, nondemonstrable, magical, superstitious, mythological worldview inhabited by invisible beings and controlled by supernatural forces. (Although, increasingly, with some scientists talking of parallel universes and other such phenomena, the Purāṇic cosmography can sometimes seem a little less "mythic" in comparison!) Where the modern West has prioritized reason and empiricism17 as the highest reliable source of knowledge since its "enlightenment," other cultures such as those of India have not had the same con ict between religion and science and the tension inherited from the subsequent separation of these two domains, at least historically. Let us keep in mind that the Christian context that triggered this separation was a European a air. The Western Enlightenment assumption that the ultimacy of reason is a universal and absolute given will be challenged by anyone open to

understanding most mokṣa traditions of India on their own terms, and certainly the Bhāgavata tradition. While developing a rich array of highly sophisticated reason-based intellectual systems,18 these traditions have often marshaled these in support of transrational and supraempirical realities. And the existence of these realities frequently rests on the authority of sacred texts (see the Vedānta Sūtras I.1.3) and/or on the accounts of rugged yogī exemplars. The authoritativeness of such yogīs, in turn, rests on their own claims to direct personal experience that is "transempirical" (para-pratyakṣa). 19 Yoga's very de nition is to experience states of consciousness beyond the intellect, announced by Patañjali in the very opening verses of his sūtras (I.1–4).

Thus the practices and appeal of bhakti will make no sense—or at least no sense recognizable to traditional Vaiṣṇavas—unless we

recognize the fact that these texts locate themselves as sacred history—records of the superhuman deeds and arrangements

enacted by the supreme Īśvara when He broke into human time and

space or, in the opening words of the tenth book, "the deeds

performed by the Almighty Lord, the Creator of the Universe, when

He incarnated" (I.2–3). We can take this or leave it: our task, established at the onset, is simply to present the Truth claims of the

Bhāgavata tradition in its own terms to the best of our abilities, not to attempt to in uence how the reader chooses to make sense of them. We trust it is eminently clear by now that the central feature

of those claims is that—to once again borrow some phraseology in

order to stress the universalism as opposed to the "Hindu-ness" of

the claim—Kṛṣṇa is God the Father for the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. And

the text's tenth book we will encounter in part 3 claims to be a record of His deeds when He descended on earth.

So, as we have seen from the nine processes of bhakti yoga, in essence, bhakti is nothing other than becoming attracted to these deeds, hearing them, remembering them, reciting them, enacting

them in drama and festivals, commemorating them at the times of

year they occurred, undertaking pilgrimage to the places made holy

by their activities, worshipping them through temple mediums, and

other such immersive ritual practices. In advanced stages, one

becomes so absorbed and enamored by these stories that one loses

interest in everything else—that is, everything pertaining to prakṛti (as with the ultimate stage of detachment of Yoga Sūtras I.16). [20] The same holds true for the other bhakti traditions based on other manifestations of Īśvara. So there we have it: when all is said and done, this is what bhakti yoga is, not just in Jīva's tradition, but in almost all premodern bhakti traditions. The metaphysical di erences and variants outlined in the previous section notwithstanding, most forms of bhakti are predicated on accepting some sort of reality to a form of Īśvara or Īśvarī and commemorating His or Her associated qualities and deeds.

In sum, while the historicity of Kṛṣṇa might be the glaring

anomaly in all of this from a rationalist point of view (the elephant

in the room, so to speak), to understand the appeal of bhakti to its followers, it serves to keep in mind that these stories are not considered myth. They are as true to the bhaktas as the narratives of the Old Testament, New Testament, and Koran are to the faithful of the various Abrahamic monotheistic traditions. For the bhaktas, if there is an almighty Īśvara, then that Īśvara can surely enter into the world and manipulate prakṛti to perform astonishing deeds irrespective of what our nite minds and limited knowledge systems might care to say about it. For the Bhāgavata, what else is the meaning of words such as "in nite," "unlimited," and "almighty"?

In fact, such confounding of our human rational capabilities to comprehend these deeds or pigeonhole them into familiar human

empirically based epistemic categories is not only self-evident, but a

source of great relish for the devotee: "Just as an ignorant person

does not understand the behavior of an actor, so no creature of limited intelligence can understand through words, mind, or

cleverness, the pastimes of the Supreme Creator when He exhibits

His names and forms" (I.3.37).

Having said all that, I would venture to speculate that even for

most modern educated bhaktas, schooled in the intellectual currents owing from Western post-Enlightenment thought, whether or not

the fabulous events pertaining to Kṛṣṇa's incarnation actually happened in veri able historical time and space is less important

than relishing the meditation that if Īśvara is unlimited and omnipotent, as all theists hold Him to be, then any or all events featuring Him such as those we will encounter in part 3 certainly could have happened simply as an expression of His divine will.

While one cannot renegotiate the fact that the text clearly presents

itself as passing down historical records of Īśvara's divine descents, it nonetheless identi es its main purpose in its very opening verses

as conveying rasa, love of God. It is the experience of this rasa that is of interest to bhaktas, not the laborious minutiae of historical reconstruction: The literature, which reveals the qualities of

Bhagavān, is literature that is true, that is auspicious, that is purifying. It is such literature, which is pleasing and charming and

which always provides an ever-fresh joyful experience for the mind.

It is such literature which dries up the ocean of despair for all people—the literature wherein the glories of Kṛṣṇa are recited …

even if there are errors in every line. (XII.12.48–51, my italics) The Bhāgavata is signing on to being a venue for transmitting a beautiful vision of God as its ultimate raison d'être. The insistence on historicality that can be empirically veri ed via archaeology, linguistics, numismatics, text criticism, and so forth has emerged since the European Enlightenment as a response to intellectual

dynamics, tensions, and developments in Christendom in response

to the historical claims of its textual traditions.21 That these methods and ways of thinking have been exported and seemingly

universalized is a feature of past European colonialism and present

Western economic and political power, 22 but they may not always be so relevant or share the same importance with what is central to

the bhakta's experience.23

But the fact is, post-Enlightenment modes and methods of

evaluating sacred histories have been exported and they have been

made de facto normative, at least in academic centers of learning.

And it is also a fact that the monotheistic traditions of Hindu bhakti such as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, centered on the historicality of Kṛṣṇa's

incarnation (as that of Rāma and the other avatāras), have much more of a challenge engaging modern scienti c methods of

historical reconstruction than the monistic traditions. It was the incompatibility of biblical chronology and the Genesis narratives of

the Old Testament with the emerging historical methods of geology,

archaeology, linguistics, and text criticism (as well as the encounter

with non-European civilizations) that lay at the heart of the

Enlightenment and spawned the academic study of religion in the rst place. Monistic traditions such as advaita Vedānta, while nonetheless certainly accepting the Purāṇa accounts as historical and literally true in the realm of conventional reality discussed previously (vyavahārika—that is, true to the same extent pots, pans, mountains, stars in the sky, and any other perceivable phenomenon are true and real), consider them ultimately all illusory, māyā, on the level of absolute reality (pāramārthika). There is a bit less at stake here. Monotheistic Kṛṣṇa bhakti, as we know, revolves around the deeds performed by a real Īśvara in real human space and time, just as normative Christianity depends on the reality of a historical Christ. Such centrality of the historical dimension is much less negotiable and so is much more challenged by modernity. 24

Pertinent here is that centuries before the challenges introduced

by the Western juxtaposition of myth versus history during the

colonial period impacted Hindu intellectuals, Jīva had outlined in his Kṛṣṇa Sandarbha that Kṛṣṇa's līlā has a divine counterpart, which is eternally enacted in a trans -prakṛtic Brahman dimension. This Brahman realm, Goloka, coexists with this earthly realm but is inaccessible to sensual perception and rational thought (anu 106, 110–16, 153, 172). 25 It can, however, be accessed by advanced bhāgavatas in deep states of samādhi (as we encountered in the passages from Caitanya's life). So while Kṛṣṇa's līlā is certainly held to be a historical event in the Bhāgavata, Jīva also nds ground in the text itself to suggest that the līlās are simultaneously always transpiring in this eternal, coexisting, non- prakṛtic counterpart.

While Goloka is beyond the range of empiricism and human reason,

it is nonetheless a realm that is coextensive with this realm of prakṛti and hence can be experienced in this world in bhakti samādhi, as we have seen.

Indeed, while Hindu responses to modernity are an enormous

topic in their own right, we can brie y note that a much later representative of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, Bhaktivinoda Thakur, in the

nineteenth century, availed himself of this alternative spiritual reality when confronted with the empirical methods of historical reconstruction reaching the Hindu intelligentsia of his time from the

West.26 As a high court judge in colonial India and very much an early apologist for the Kṛṣṇa tradition responding to the challenges

of modernity, Bhaktivinoda separated what he called the ādhunika-

vāda, "modern approach" to the study of scripture, from its paramārtha-prada, 27 "transcendent aspect." The sphere of historical authority of the ādhunika-vāda pertains to the text's references to space and historical time, which could be subject to the scrutiny of empirical methodologies and consequently tinkered with and, if

necessary, readily adjusted in response to modern historical

methods. The paramārtha-prada, on the other hand, is the divine dimension of Kṛṣṇa's līlā, beyond prakṛti, and hence immune to the intellect and senses, but, following Jīva, a realm experientially accessible by deep bhakti. In this way, Bhaktivinoda strove to safeguard the claims of the bhakta mystics from the threatening deconstructive dismantling of Western methodologies of historical reconstruction (unlike some of his contemporaries and successors

who were much more willing to completely jettison the Bhāgavata

Kṛṣṇa and the Purāṇas in general in their determination to nd

modes of monotheism in Hinduism that could pass—and surpass—

the standards set by Western moral and rational discourse28).

In fact, revisionist readings of older texts go back to the middle

Vedic period. Already in the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads, mystical interpretations of the Vedic rites become increasingly

evident (see, for example, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I.1), as do naturalistic interpretation of Vedic myths. 29 Commenting on the oldest Vedic material, the twelfth-century theologian Madhva

identi ed his own three di erent ways of reading the Ṛg-Veda: the historical, the mystical, and the transcendent. 30 Jīva himself notes that the Bhāgavata can instruct in three di erent moods: either as a master, or as friend, or as the beloved (Tattva Sandarbha XXVI.2). A later exegete of the same school, Viśvanātha, uses another triple lens: the Bhāgavata contains three progressive levels of content. On a generic level, it is like the light, shining knowledge on the soul, in accordance with the older ātman traditions; beyond this, it is like the sun (a greater source of light), illuminating the superexcellence of Kṛṣṇa as the Ultimate Truth; and, highest of all, it is the ripe fruit of bliss. While this highest third phase breaks the luminosity

metaphor, it surpasses the other two ways of reading the text insofar

as it deals with experience rather than just providing knowledge. 31

In fact, it is to promote this experience of love of God that is the

ultimate goal of the Bhāgavata.

While these traditional theologians mean rather di erent things

by their respective schemas, present-day readers may thus nd

themselves following a well-worn path of tripartite hermeneutics.

Most modern lenses may also very well view the text as containing

three distinct levels that correspond to our own intellectual milieu: a

historical core preserving records of royal dynasties and kingdoms; a

mythological overlay involving a world of various levels of divine beings and superhuman mortals and their fabulous deeds; and a

theological one representing the emergence of a powerful

monotheistic tradition drawing from a yogic backdrop and centered on the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that was to sweep across the subcontinent. In any event, clearly the Bhāgavata o ers profound insights into the human condition that transcend time, place, and the vicissitudes of the ever-changing empirical and rational knowledge systems pertaining to material reality. For those

interested in the wisdom traditions for their insights into the nature

of the mind and its workings, or guidance into what might

constitute the higher goals of life, one is perfectly entitled to extract the yoga teachings of the Bhāgavata from their larger social, scienti c, historical, cosmological, and related contexts, just as one

does with insights of the great Greek philosophers, who, after all, navigated within the contours of a cognate cosmography. In fact, those familiar with the Bhāgavata may notice we have favored precisely such yogic/ jñāna (wisdom) narratives in our selections in part 2. The tales and teachings here can certainly be read from the point of view of the psychological, philosophical, and soteriological

messages they impart over and beyond the surface narratives.

In fact, there are numerous instances of premodern Indian

thinkers proposing alternative or nonliteral readings of sections or

elements in the Purāṇas without rejecting them as authoritative

texts. The later astronomers come to mind, who accepted the

observation-based data of the later Sūrya Siddhānta (astronomical) traditions without overtly rejecting the very di erent cosmological

accounts in the much older Purāṇas. Likewise, and of great

relevance here, strains of the Sanskrit literary tradition theorized about when indirect signi cation is to be applied to a passage where

a literal reading is rendered impossible by other knowledge

systems.32

In fact, one can nd instances of the Bhāgavata itself o ering opportunities for nonliteral readings. In the twelfth book, for

example, Viṣṇu's kaustubha gem is said to represent the ātman; his

ower garland, the guṇas; his yellow garment, the Vedic meter; his sacred thread, the syllable oṁ; his club, prāṇa, the life airs; the various implements he holds in his hands, the elements; his bow, Time; and so on for a number of verses (XII.11.10–20). All this is not to say that the text is renegotiating the ontological reality of these items, but, rather, that it does not appear to be threatened by

nonliteral readings for those conditioned by and subject to rational

modes of thinking. Along similar lines, after describing the various

realms of the universe in book 5, the text concludes by specifying

that these cosmographic descriptions are intended to bring the mind

to contemplating Īśvara through His "material" perceivable form of creation. This is the God of natural theology. Once the mind has become pro cient in this, and puri ed simply by dint of

contemplating Īśvara in whatever mode this takes in accordance with the mental predisposition of a person, then one "should lead

the mind to the subtle form of Bhagavān" (V.26.38–40; see also II.2.14). In other words, contemplating the wondrous realms of the

universe as God's body is rst and foremost a method to develop bhakti. In the same way, the descriptions of king lineages "have been narrated with the intention of expressing detachment from and

insight into [the temporal nature of material grandeur]. They are just a display of rhetoric, they are not the Ultimate Truth" (XII.3.14–

15). It is not the minutiae of dates, historicality, geography, or cosmology, etc., that interests the Bhāgavata but revealing the eeting nature of even the grandest material accomplishments and

conquests. The text's central claim and raison d'être is that if one absorbs one's mind in the stories pertaining to Kṛṣṇa and His

amazing deeds, one will speedily and easily attain the generic

quali cations of yoga (dispassion toward the world of sense objects and the like) and develop an experience of love of God. What the

rational mind may make of the stories is secondary to this e ect.

So although the Bhāgavata from its opening verses on unambiguously situates itself as simultaneously sacred and temporal

history, it does not demand that one is required to accept this claim

for the stories to perform their function. In fact, as was discussed in

"Meditation in Hate and Lust," the text takes some pains to describe

how various individuals who could never accept the transcendent

factuality of Kṛṣṇa as claimed by the Bhāgavata tradition nonetheless attained the goals of bhakti by dint of immersing their minds in thoughts of Him, some in hatred and with violent intent. 33 The stories ultimately seek to implant a seed of rāga, love of God, embedded in the larger generic yoga context of stressing the futility of pursuing any other self-centered prakṛtic rāga. If one attains this bhakti rāga, irrespective of how one interprets the

stories—literally, metaphorically, symbolically, or, as with Bhaktivinoda, esoterically —then the Bhāgavata has attained its ultimate goals.

In any event, returning to the ontological status of these forms of

Īśvara and Īśvarī, to perhaps underscore the fact that acceptance of their reality is not part of some classical mythic traditions of the premodern past but very much part of a living tradition, we might

just mention in passing that a number of modern-day gurus have claimed (or were recorded by their disciples as claiming) to have had visions of all forms of Īśvara. Focusing just on claims pertaining to Kṛṣṇa, and from Hindu gures well-known in the West, the hagiography of Rāmakrishna, Vivekānanda's guru, records his visions of Kṛṣṇa. 34 One of the most in uential gurus of modern India (and, through his disciples, in the West), Śivānanda, writes in the rst line of his autobiography of his vision of Kṛṣṇa.35 His disciple, too, Vishnudevananda, who established the Śivānanda Organization in his guru's name, claimed to have had a vision of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in a place that he consequently purchased as a result and developed as

the organization's Grass Valley, California, āśrama. 36 Aurobindo, the remarkable freedom ghter turned mystic, had a vision of Kṛṣṇa

while imprisoned. 37 Iyengar, whose in uence in the spread of āsana, modern postural yoga, has been immense (but, as we have noted, who still maintains identi cation with Rāmānuja's Śrī Vaiṣṇava Vedānta lineage), when young and struggling to maintain his family

in the days before yoga became a global phenomenon told his disciples that Viṣṇu appeared to him in a dream and told him that

he should continue with his commitment to this path and that all his

di culties would be resolved. 38 Amma, "the Hugging Mother" (Mata Amritanandamayi), had visions of Kṛṣṇa in her youth.39 Yogananda Paramahamsa reports a vision of Kṛṣṇa in his autobiography.40 We can also note that while not identifying this being as Kṛṣṇa (but rather as Śiva),

but along similar lines, Muktānanda describes a vision of a blue boy in his remarkable autobiography (along with a prior vision of a form of Īśvarī). [41]

These are just samples of claims to visions of Kṛṣṇa from very recent famous guru gures who became well-known in the West.

There are countless other claims to visions of other forms of Īśvara (for example, the famous mathematician Śrīnivāsa Rāmāṇujan

claimed not only to have had visions of a form of the Goddess Nāmagiri Tāyār, but to have received many complex equations from

her). Obviously they are all anecdotal and hagiographical, but

whatever we may choose to make of them, and whatever alternative

(typically post-Freudian) explanations we may prefer to adopt in order to t them into our intellectual comfort zones, claims to visions of all the various forms of Īśvara and Īśvarī are ubiquitous throughout the history of Indian culture from the late Vedic age till the present. In short, bhakti texts all claim that Īśvara can be seen by the sincere and fully dedicated devotee (see Gītā XI.54 for an example of this), and however we in the so-called rational West may

opt to interpret these assertions, and whatever reductionistic

interpretations we may prefer to impose on them, the point we are

making here is simply that bhakti yoga very much remains a living

tradition and, as with other mystical traditions, one that lays its claims to veri cation in direct personal experience. Our Western

“enlightenment” and the historical factors that triggered its

intellectual trajectory are clearly drawing from a very di erent set

of epistemological experiences and presuppositions from the

“enlightened” traditions long current in India.

Be all this as it may, our own methodological approach in this volume has been phenomenological—allowing the Bhāgavata to tell

its own story and make its own truth claims both in its own voice

and through the lenses applied to it by the later tradition

represented by Jīva and Rūpa. We have avoided imposing any

external modern interpretative models upon its meanings and

signi cance; our task, established immediately and clearly at the beginning of the introduction, has been to o er the interested

reader a glimpse into one universe of traditional bhakti prior to its encounter with modernity, not to attempt to in uence how the

modern reader should make sense of it all. Of course, from the perspective of bhakti practitioners, it remains to be seen what forms transplanted bhakti yoga will take among the various yoga communities in the West. We have seen what has happened to the radical world/body/mind-renouncing asceticism of Patañjalian Yoga

in its appropriation by and commodi cation into what has better been called “modern postural yoga” in many expressions of practice laying claim to that tradition, at least in name.42 Even then, for those who do in fact engage classical yoga philosophy on its own terms, the basic conceptual commitment it requires—that consciousness can be removed from all objects and withdrawn into

its own nature (I.3)—is a lot less demanding than the leap of faith

central to the Bhāgavata. Although the dualism of, say, Plato and normative Christianity is di erent from that of Yoga, 43 some sort of a mind/body dualism has remained if not hegemonic, certainly the

dominant view in most Western intellectual traditions throughout

recorded history. And even as a neurological view of consciousness now has a strong following among some communities of scientists,

and the Cartesian variant of dualism has long faced various

philosophical challenges, the notion of consciousness being distinct

from the body is still very much a defensible and certainly a culturally familiar belief.

The point here is that a non- bhakta can engage (much of[44] the Yoga Sūtras and still feel connected to familiar cultural, theological, and intellectual landmarks. The Bhāgavata, if taken on its own terms

—that the forms and manifestations of Īśvara are real transcendent Beings and their wonderful deeds factually enacted in human time

and space—is clearly demanding a much more drastic conceptual

leap of faith from the perspective of reality as construed not only by

our modern intellectual and scienti c traditions, but by the Western

world's historically religious ones. This is a leap that, from the point of view of the Western literary tradition, nds its closest cognate in

a Greco-Roman past that has been long eclipsed and relegated to the

realm of myth. Such a leap is obviously expecting a lot.

There is thus every reason to suppose that in its e orts to

establish roots on the landscape of transplanted Eastern spirituality,

bhakti will develop even more radically recon gured meanings and expressions from its traditional genealogies than generic yoga has done. And it, too, while hopefully still attracting practitioners committed to the worldview of the traditional sources, will in all likelihood continue to be

seen as another source of Eastern material that provides further ingredients for the pick-and-choose, mix-and—

match approach typical of modern watered-down Western

spiritualities. (By "watered-down," I partly intend that the tapas, austerity/discipline, so central to all Indic mokṣa traditions tends to get, if not jettisoned, signi cantly diluted in the New Age alternative

religious landscape.) Even if this is so, independent of the

cosmological, historical, and social context within which it situates

itself, and the Īśvara- centered theism that is its all-pervading raison d'être, it is hard to deny that at its most basic level in terms of generic yoga teachings, the Bhāgavata o ers powerful insights into the human condition and the nature of the mind that will always remain perennially relevant to human beings of any time and place.

Whatever future awaits them, the stories of Kṛṣṇa and the other

forms of Īśvara have a power of their own that, as we know from the preceding discussions, can plant a seed of attraction for this

mischievous gure, but one that does not always sit comfortably

with the rational mind. On a personal note, as an academic

committed to the ideals of objective intellectual rigor and integrity,

who has nonetheless devoted his life to this tradition, I can attest that these tensions are irresolvable, as perhaps they should be. The

dance between reason and the heart is never-ending—sometimes

causing one to sway and veer toward one modality, sometimes the

other. One can remain in a state of dissonance about this, or one can

simply become comfortable wearing di erent hats appropriate to

the di erent dharmas, or domains: the dharma of objective, historical, contextual analysis as required by academia, and the dharma as de ned by the Bhāgavata discussed previously—the subjective, ahistorical, and transcontextual devotion to a Supreme Being. These dharmic spheres require di erent theoretical languages, vocabularies, conceptual structures, methodologies, and associations of participants. One can navigate between them without needing to

resolve their tensions and disjunctions—and, indeed, recognize the

impossibility of ever doing so. By de nition, transrational

transempirical states and experiences are metaphysically and

epistemologically incompatible with rational methods of empirical

analysis and veri cation—a very well-worn and persistent topic in

the study of religion. The Bhāgavata repeatedly claims that Kṛṣṇa's attractive qualities supersede and out all intellectual, social,

cultural, and similar considerations.

However, apologetics can go only so far: at the end of the day, for the bhakti traditions to remain living worldviews with positive relevance to the intellectual communities of their times, especially

in their transplanted forms outside of India, they will increasingly

have to engage the challenges of modernity, even given the

epistemological disjunction noted above, just as Christian thinkers have done for almost two centuries. Vaiṣṇava theologians have

historically invested great intellectual energy in presenting their theologies in as rational and philosophically rigorous a manner as possible—and in dialogue with the scholarly currents of their day and age (as is the

theologian's dharma in any time and place). They have addressed opposing viewpoints incompatible with their essential premises (the pūrvapakṣa) with integrity and con dence.

Continuing that process has barely begun, given the still very

recently transplanted nature of bhakti in the West, and it remains to be seen what forms this might take. These traditions have only just

begun to produce public intellectuals adequately equipped

academically to engage in scholarly dialogue—in conversation both

with other monotheisms in particular as well as the broader

comparative eld of religion on one side and with modern science

and the scienti c method on the other. 45 There is good reason (see Edelmann 2014) to suppose these edgling but very commendable

e orts will continue and increase. And one would like to hope that

the orthodox paṇḍits and ācāryas, the bearers of the traditional Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta saṁpradāyas (lineages), will also be inspired to engage the intellectual currents of their present time in a

more active and public manner than has hitherto been the case, either personally or by inspiring their followers who have the

requisite scholarly credentials to do so. In doing so, they would thereby follow in the footsteps of their predecessors who have

always stalwartly risen to the occasion over the centuries—indeed,

over the two millennia—before them. 46

But, ultimately, when everything is said and done, bhakti is about love of God, and that is a matter of the heart47 that lays claim to a transrational domain. This may not always be reconcilable with

what constitutes reality as reconstructed by the intellect using the methods of empiricism and human reason. In the end, one's

interpretative partialities and modes of making sense of what is going on with these stories re ect how comfortable one is with this

dichotomy and what one accepts as one's ultimate source of

epistemological authority (which is a matter of faith, whatever

episteme ones prioritizes). And, perhaps more ultimate still from a

bhakti perspective, one might even suggest that one's position on such things in turn re ects the depth, or absence, of one's personal

bhakti rāga and nothing else.

Hierarchies of Bliss

Let us now, by way of conclusion, return to the frames of reference

and categories of the Bhagavata itself, which has been our commitment in this project all along, and summarize the

implications of everything we have discussed from the perspective

of yoga in general. As we have seen, one of the main subtexts of the Bhāgavata and its derivative literature such as the Sandarbhas is to repeatedly contrast the bliss of a personal relationship between Īśvara and the bhakta with the experience of impersonal, nonrelational ātman/Brahman immersion. We have used the language of monotheism and monism for these modalities—but we

should mention that they will often be encountered in theological texts as saguṇa Brahman, the Absolute Truth with personality, form, and qualities, and nirguṇa Brahman, formless and qualityless Truth (as in III.32.36). We have discussed how, according to Bhāgavata ontology (and mainstream Hinduism in general), prakṛti is an active dynamic, sensual, personalized,

and object-focused realm of reality, in which the ātman is embedded. Beyond this is the passive,

nondynamic, trans-sensual, impersonal, and subject-centered[48]

dimension of reality, consisting of the experience of the ātman, a state synonymous with Brahman immersion, where consciousness is

absorbed in its own nature. Beyond this again, there is another active, dynamic, sensual, personal, and object-focused realm of

reality, but in this case made not of temporal unconscious prakṛti stu , but of eternal conscious Brahman stu , the realms of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka. The liberated ātmans attaining these realms again become reembodied, but this time not in a prakṛtic form in which su ering is constitutional and endemic, but in an eternal body made of pure sat-cit-ānanda Brahman— a divine form made of being and consciousness in which bliss is inherent and ever—

expanding.

Therefore, given that in the Vedānta and Purāṇa traditions, from

the earliest Upaniṣads and through practically the entire history of

late Vedic-derived literature onward, there is little disagreement that the ātman is eternal and conscious[49] (with the partial exception of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣiká traditions), [50] one's options, therefore, are merely of what it is that one ends up being conscious or aware. In other words, since it can never be not conscious or not aware, owing

to its eternal unchanging nature, the ātman's essential inherent constitution requires that it be conscious of something for all eternity, so what is it that awareness ends up being aware of? For as

long as we are embodied, the instrument utilized by consciousness

when seeking any object of awareness is the mind, so, put

di erently, what is it that we are going to do with this mind, as it is never inactive in the waking state (other than in the states of samādhi)? In embodied existence, fueled by objects of desire, awareness is focused primarily on the sensations produced by these objects through the instruments of the mind and sense organs, all provided by prakṛti in accordance with those desires.51 Upon realizing that it is this very quest for sensual pleasure that is itself the fundamental cause of su ering, one may seek to renounce desire, transcend its karmic consequences and hence su ering, and realize the true source of consciousness freed from its ensnarement with prakṛti and all objects. 52 Gaining success in this, one attains nirbīja samādhi, a passive state of self-awareness53—that is to say, the object of awareness becomes awareness itself, although, put more precisely, the subject/object duality evaporates and pure objectless consciousness is all that remains. But if, as described earlier, one encounters and becomes attracted to the object of consciousness called Īśvara—that is if, while embodied, one happens to hear about Īśvara's names, qualities, forms, deeds, and so on by having the good fortune to encounter the Bhāgavata or the bhāgavatas—one might become attracted to developing a relationship with this Being. For this, awareness again needs the instruments of mind and senses— whether made of prakṛti in this world or of Brahman stu in the Goloka realm—in order to see, hear, think about, and interact with Kṛṣṇa. Thus, as we have discussed, after hearing about Kṛṣṇa, even jñānis who have realized their own ātman may decide to reconnect with the psychophysical mechanism of the mind and senses so as to dive into the ocean of Hari's līlās.

So for the Bhāgavata, consciousness has three basic options: to be absorbed in prakṛti, to be absorbed in itself, or to be absorbed in devotional thoughts and loving service of Īśvara. We might wish to note here that any process of yoga is taking place in the mind. The mind is nothing other than a storage container (āsaya) for saṁskāras. Both bhoga (prakṛtic enjoyment) and all forms of yoga are ultimately enacted by the saṁskāras of the mind. In conventional life in the world, when ignorant of the self, the prominent saṁskāra in the mind is prakṛtic rāga, desire; the goal of life is bhoga, pleasure; and everything else is processed in terms of its value to the ful llment of rāga. The jñāna yoga path for those frustrated with bhoga involves xing the mind on the teachings of the Upaniṣads or other such knowledge texts pertaining to the ultimacy of the ātman

and the temporality of prakṛti. This boils down to keeping the ātman saṁskāra as the dominant saṁskāra or presence in the mind, which monitors all other saṁskāras, ensuring they are in line with thoughts pertaining to mokṣa, the ultimate goal of jñāna. Dhyāna yoga (Patañjalian-type yoga) involves the ultimate suppression of all states of mind whatsoever, so the practice here is to keep the nirodha (suppressing) saṁskāra reigning supreme and suppressing any other saṁskāra that might try to make its presence felt (I.50– 51). And bhakti involves keeping thoughts of one's beloved Īśvara foremost in the mind, and of one's vaidhī or rāgānugā relationship with Him, hence the Īśvara saṁskāra is dominant in this practice.

But whether one is cultivating the prakṛtic rāga saṁskāra, the ātman saṁskāra, the nirodha saṁskāra, or the Īśvara saṁskāra, these are all saṁskāras and therefore all states of mind. Bottom line: We get to choose which set of saṁskāras we wish to pursue in life.

In ultimate postmortem liberation, as I trust is clear by now, the

bhakta seeks to replace the mind made of prakṛti stu with one made of Brahman stu , but in any circumstance one still needs a mind to perform bhakti, and mind is not inherent in the ātman, it is an external covering (Gītā VII.4). So until attaining a Brahman mind (and senses) in Vaikuṇṭha or Goloka in the postmortem state, for as long as bhaktas remain embodied in prakṛti, they choose to retain the mind and senses made of prakṛti so as to

contemplate and actively serve their beloved Īśvara, rather than uncouple from the mind and remain in a state of pure but passive consciousness, as per standard Patañjalian-type yoga practice. Ultimately, why some yogīs would abandon the state of ātman immersion, promoted as

enormously blissful in the Upaniṣads, 54 and hence the goal of so many jñāna and yoga traditions, so as to again reconnect with their minds, after so much hard work detaching themselves from these

very minds as the source of su ering, is very simple. Channeling consciousness through the mind, intellect, and senses onto Īśvara is simply incomparably more blissful than any other experience in

existence, including that of the bliss, ānanda, inherent in the ātman:

“The pleasure [experienced] by embodied beings from meditating

on Your lotus feet or from hearing about Your deeds from Your devotees does not exist in Brahman, even though that is also a part of Your own majesty, O Lord” (IV.9.10).

Therefore, in all this, we nd a di erence among the various

Hindu soteriological (mokṣa) traditions with regard to liberation—

even as all agree that this is a state beyond su ering. Let us compare

some of them in this regard (leaving aside the Cārvāka/Lokāyata-grouped materialist schools that do not accept any postmortem

liberation). 55 The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣiká schools hold that the liberated state, which they also accept as uncoupling the ātman from the mind (manas), is simply one of sat, being.56 For these schools, there is not even consciousness, cit, in mokṣa, as this is a quality that emerges only when the ātman is connected with the instrumentality of the mind in saṁsāra. Nor, certainly, is there ānanda; there is just unconscious being. The soteriological goal of yoga here, mokṣa, is freedom from su ering (Nyāya Sūtras I.1.2, 9, 22), not some beati c state of bliss, and this freedom is

attained by not activating the presence of consciousness altogether in the liberated state.

Sāṅkhya and classical Yoga, in their attempt to attain a state beyond su ering, go a step further: while these schools accept that

the liberated state consists of sat, being, 57 they di er from Nyāya in also assigning cit, consciousness, to mokṣa. Thus, Sāṅkhya posits a liberated state of conscious being, sat and cit. 58 Since this consciousness in liberation remains immersed in its own being or essence, it is free from the su ering inherent in immersion in the temporal experiences of prakṛti (Yoga Sūtras II.16), but here, too (at least for Sāṅkhya), this is not deemed a blissful experience. It is contentless consciousness.59 Thus, the common denominator of all these traditions' view of yoga and mokṣa so far is primarily one of freedom from pain.

Vedānta goes a step further than just freedom from su ering and

ascribes a positive experience of bliss, ānanda, to the liberated ātman, since it considers Brahman/ātman to be constitutionally

"made of bliss" ānandamayo 'bhyāsāt (Vedānta Sūtras I.1.12). The Taittirīya Upaniṣad (II.8) and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (IV.3.37) consider this bliss countless times greater than the temporal

pleasures of prakṛti. When consciousness is redirected to its source, ātman, it reexperiences this bliss inherent in its own being. Thus, for Vedānta, the experience of mokṣa is certainly one of sat and cit, but also of ānanda as well.

The Bhāgavata takes the graded notion of bliss much further still, since, as we know, those who encounter the līlās of Hari nd the bliss of Brahman/ ātman inconsequential in comparison (IV.9.10). We can recall that right at the outset of his treatise, Rūpa describes bhakti as minimizing mokṣa, and thereby any associated bliss inherent in the ātman, but he also contrasts this with the "special intense bliss" of bhakti (Eastern Quadrant I.17).60 In fact, he goes on to state that "if the bliss of Brahman were multiplied billionfold, it would not equal an atom in the ocean of bliss of bhakti." In

fact, Brahman bliss is no greater than the "water in the footprint of a calf for one swimming in the ocean of bliss after attaining a vision of Kṛṣṇa" (Eastern Quadrant I.38–39). Just as the Taittirīya Upaniṣad takes the bliss of ātman to be billions of times greater than the greatest bliss of prakṛti, so do Kṛṣṇa practitioners take the bliss of bhakti to be billions of times greater than the bliss of ātman.

Rhetoric aside, Īśvara, after all, is the whole, and the ātman His part, aṁśa, so the bliss ensuing from the in nite whole eclipses anything inherent in its in nitesimal part. In sum, as Rūpa notes: "There are

three kinds of happiness: from the senses, from Brahman, and from Īśvara" (Eastern Quadrant I.130).

Not only do the bhaktas eschew liberation, they would rather remain embodied in prakṛti if this means they can have senses to hear, speak about, and serve their beloved Lord, even if this means

remaining eternally in saṁsāra. Indeed, they would prefer to have thousands of senses simultaneously all the more to be able to

immerse their minds in thoughts of their beloved Kṛṣṇa: "Please grant me this boon: let me have 10,000 ears [to hear about You]"

(IV.20.24). Of course, Hari frees them from this dilemma and

awards them a divine Brahman body and senses and His personal association for all eternity in His realm of Goloka in accordance with their bhāva. But bhaktas seek a body with sense organs and a mind of one sort or another, whether made of prakṛti or Brahman, rather than conventional mokṣa, so that they can relate for all eternity to the qualities and pastimes of Īśvara by which they have become enamored. Because for them, this is the bliss that has no substitute.

Rūpa concludes the rst "wave" of his Ocean of the Nectar of the

Experience of Bhakti with the truism common to yoga traditions in

general61 that the only proof is simply the experience itself. In the case of bhakti: "From just a tiny taste of bhakti, an experience of its nature occurs; but this does not occur from just rational thought"

(Eastern Quadrant I.45). In the words of the Bhāgavata: "Bhakti, experience of the Supreme, and detachment from all other things, these three things manifest simultaneously for one who is

surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, just as satisfaction, nourishment, and the removal of hunger manifest with every mouthful for one who is

eating" (XI.2.42). Without tasting its bliss, one cannot claim to have

had experience of bhakti: "Where is bhakti without the hairs standing on end in ecstasy, without the heart melting, and without

tears of joy?… One absorbed in bhakti to Me [Kṛṣṇa], whose voice is

choked up, whose heart melts, who sometimes cries incessantly and sometimes laughs, who cries out without embarrassment and

dances, puri es the world" (XI.14.23–24). Such claims cannot be

rationalized, and one's inspiration to seek such experiences or not to

do so re ects one's faith in the words of the Bhāgavata or bhāgavatas or not.

With regard to rational thought and human reason, continues

Rūpa (as anyone who has studied the history of philosophy—Indic

or Western—might concur), "a position established diligently by a

skillful philosopher, is demonstrated to be inadequate by someone

else, who follows a di erent view" (Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu Eastern Quadrant 54–46). Or, as the Nārada Bhakti Sūtras we will encounter in part 5 puts it: "Philosophical debate should not be relied upon,

because it is inconclusive, and because there are so many points of

view" (74–75). One is reminded here, too, of a verse in the

Mahābhārata: "Logic is unreliable, the śrutis (sacred texts) express divergent viewpoints, and there is no ṛṣi (sage) who does not have a di erent philosophy [from other sages]. The essence of dharma is hidden in the innermost recesses of the hearts of realized souls; one should therefore follow the path traversed by an enlightened soul." 62

And, earlier still, in a delightful verse from the Upaniṣads:

"Therefore a brāhmaṇa should give up scholarship and remain childlike; when he has given up being a scholar as well as being a

child, he becomes wise; and when he has ceased to be both wise and

unswise, he becomes a [real] brāhmaṇa.… All else is frustration"

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III.5). Thus, re ecting the Bhāgavata, 63 one of Rūpa's sixty-four principles of bhakti is "renouncing [the study] of many books" (Eastern Quadrant II.79). 64

In conclusion, there are thus choices to be made in human life in

the worldview of the Bhāgavata. In conjunction with the other jñāna and yoga traditions of its day,65 the text conceives of the purpose or raison d'être of the in nite realm of prakṛti as existing simply to indulge those who choose to pursue material desires stemming from ignorance of their true selves. It does this by providing those in ignorance with a psychophysical mechanism with which to

experience the objects of desire, as well as an unlimited array of sense objects. In fact, prakṛti provides vast numbers of bodily forms66

in multiple dimensions, including celestial realms, for souls to attempt to enjoy. 67 One can wander through them inde nitely, seeking to ful ll these unful llable and insatiable desires (Gītā

III.39) by sampling this or that avor of sensual indulgence and o ering of prakṛti through the widely varying sense organs of these bodily forms . Saṁsāra as a dynamic, active realm is nothing other than this. But: "One whose mind is attached to possessions, spouse, and o spring in the duties of the household, does not nd higher Truth, but wanders on the many paths of saṁsāra" (IV.25.6).

Material desires always fail to ful ll. And there is a price tag on this option: the laws of karma. Every action performed in the pursuit of prakṛtic happiness breeds a corresponding reaction, which binds and delimits the ātman's freedom in pursuing its future desires (Yoga Sūtras II.14).

After becoming exhausted with failing to nd ultimate ful llment

through the mind and senses given the temporality of any

enjoyment they can provide, and after repeatedly experiencing

frustration instead, insight dawns in an occasional person. 68 This insight recognizes that it is embodied life itself that is essentially su ering, and it is desire itself that is its ultimate cause (Gītā III.37– 41; Yoga Sūtras II.15 .). For the Vedic-derived traditions, this leads to the option of renouncing desire and undertaking a quest for mokṣa, freedom from su ering, by seeking the true ātman self. This is accomplished by dedication to a yoga path—which can be de ned, in its lowest common denominator, as nothing other than freedom from this su ering. 69 For such seekers, given that su ering seems encoded and endemic in all activities of prakṛti experienced

by embodied beings, any end to su ering appears logically to be the opposite—inactive, passive, and static. 70 Stripped of all prakṛtic overlays, such a state naturally appears to consist of just eternal consciousness,71 and this indeed is the experience of ātman when its awareness is redirected to itself as object (Yoga Sūtras I.3). 72

From the ranks of such seekers, a few may come in contact with

Īśvara and undertake a bhakti practice: "From thousands of people, just one may aspire for perfection, and from those who have

attained perfection, hardly one knows Me in Truth" (Gītā VII.3; see also Bhāgavata VI.14.5). Here, the Bhāgavata still keeps company with many but not all jñāna and yoga traditions.73 But as discussed previously, for some of these theistic traditions, Īśvara's role is only relevant and even delimited to His function as the bestower of realization of the self74—that is, the yogī can attain mokṣa from saṁsāra by Īśvara's grace. In other words, in such schools, the relationship with Īśvara and any performance of bhakti is practical and one might even say mercantile: the yogī essentially utilizes this Īśvara Being to ultimately attain freedom from su ering—not out of a deeper permanent commitment to or interest in Īśvara Himself.

This functionalist relationship with Īśvara is also recognized in the Bhāgavata—although less enthusiastically, as we have seen (the mixed bhakti discussed previously). But where the Bhāgavata and Vaiṣṇava traditions di er from these mokṣa-oriented Īśvara traditions is that some yogīs, irrespective of any initial spiritually mercantile motivation, become so completely enraptured with Īśvara once encountered that they prefer to perpetuate this devotional

relationship for all eternity. From those who do develop such an attraction, some such yogīs recognize Īśvara to be the Supreme Ātman (Paramātman) greater than their own ātman (see Gītā XIV.18– 19), and others are simply enamored by this wondrous Being

without necessarily understanding His ontological majesty or caring

to do so. For those pursuing this attraction (rāga) devoid of any

functionalist or recompensatory motivations (the "cheating religions" mentioned in the very rst verses of the Bhāgavata), these traditions o er the option of liberated postmortem reembodiment,

but now in an eternal Brahman form and in an eternal Brahman locus, beyond prakṛtic time and space in a realm comprising sat-cit-ānanda rather than the three guṇas. For the Bhāgavata, Brahman includes a dynamic sensual dimension of pure consciousness with forms and qualities—a possibility also hinted at in the Vedānta Sūtras and Mahābhārata. 75 These are the realms of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka, as well as that of Śiva; beyond

both the dynamic sensual realm of prakṛti—including its variegated celestial dimensions— where form and quality are temporal, vulnerable, ephemeral, and

painful—and beyond, too, the passive, trans-sensual, inactive realm

of ātman/ Brahman devoid of forms and qualities, that also transcends prakṛti. Until one attains a higher rasa, so to speak, this latter passive experience of ātman naturally appears the best option:

"The seeker does not become disinclined toward the practices of yoga until he or she has developed an attraction for the stories of Kṛṣṇa."

For the Bhāgavata, from all the forms of Īśvara, including that of Viṣṇu and Śiva, Kṛṣṇa is simply the most attractive[76] (indeed, one of the etymologies of the verbal root kṛṣ is "to attract"). Kṛṣṇa's bhaktas, the bhāgavatas, become so enamored by this ute-playing, mischievous blue boy that all the above options and considerations become redundant—indeed, barely even intrude upon their frame of

reference: "The Bhāgavata is proclaimed as the essence of all Vedānta; one who is satis ed with the nectar of its rasa has no interest in anything else" (XII.13, 15). As so many of the quotes presented previously have indicated, and as the ensuing tales and teachings will stress repeatedly, all that such bhaktas wish to do is ll their minds with the thoughts, and their ears, tongues, eyes, and other senses with relishing the qualities, of their beloved Iśvara. In

this state, one loses "all concern for scriptural prescriptions or logical thought" (Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu II.292). This is not anti-intellectualism: Jīva, Rūpa, and the other Gosvāmīs were intellectual giants of their times, thoroughly schooled in and in dialogue with the scholastic conversations of their day. It is love of God,

transrational intoxication that recognizes the limitations of

empirical sensual observation and inferential rational thought and has attained blissful experience that bypasses and eclipses these epistemic

sources of knowledge (pramāṇa). These ecstatic

experiences produce a mind-set that seeks only opportunities to love

and therefore serve this wondrous Being, irrespective of any locus or

dimensionality, whether of embodied life in prakṛti or in the divine realm of Goloka—provided, of course, it is not a state of mokṣa. The bhāgavata would rather remain embodied than attain mokṣa. Once again, this is because in conventional mokṣa one is deprived of mind and senses with which to focus awareness on Īśvara, that is, "because in that state there is no nectar about Your lotus feet, which

ows out of the depths of the hearts and through the mouths of the

great souls" (IV.20.24). Other than this, anything and everything else, material or spiritual, becomes irrelevant. As the gopīs will exemplify within, in advanced stages of bhakti one becomes insanely intoxicated with Kṛṣṇa and can think of nothing else.

Indeed, both at the beginning and at the end of the Tattva Sandarbha, Jīva actually discourages anyone not interested in worshipping Kṛṣṇa from reading his work. 77 Likewise, Rūpa cautions the unwary of the consequences of engaging with the very text that takes up part 3 of this volume. This is because the tenth book is nothing other than the literary embodiment of Kṛṣṇa, this

mysterious, mischievous stealer of hearts, the etymology of whose very name points to the ultimate seducer and enchanter of souls. 78

The Bhāgavata was written precisely to entice beings away from the attachments and consequent su erings of saṁsāra toward the

possibility of an eternal, blissful relationship with the playful, lotus-eyed blue Lord: Hey friends!

If you have any attachment to the company of your family

members Do not gaze upon the form of Hari, who goes by

the name of Govinda Standing here near the banks of the

sacred Keśi ghaṭ

Smiling

Poised with three curves Radiant with the eye of a peacock

feather His wide eyes casting sidelong glances And budlike

lips resting on His ute Hey ho, you are very naive!

I presume that the sounds Produced by the verses of the tenth

book of the Bhāgavata Have become like travellers along the

pathways of your ears Just see, it is because of this That you

are now dismissive of the material goals of life: Duty,

material well-being and the ful llment of desires (dharma,

artha, kāma), Which bestow the highest well-being And you are even rejecting liberation (mokṣa) Whose essence is

happiness.

(Eastern Quadrant IV.239–40)

PART II

Tales and Teachings from the

Bhāgavata Purāṇa

Book I

Invocation and Glories of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa

Yoga Blueprint

Authors of sacred text typically begin with an invocation to their beloved deities and then announce the nature of their work. In the rst three verses below, the author establishes Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Deity and the Bhāgavata as the supreme scripture.

The rst verse is philosophically dense, as it sets out to establish the credentials of the text. We noted in the chapter "The Object of Bhakti: Īśvara , Bhagavān , Brahman , and Divine Hierarchies" that the Bhāgavata is responding to both Vedānta and Purāṇa currents. Thus, the rst phrase replicates the second verse of the Vedānta Sūtras, thereby underscoring the claim that the Bhāgavata is a commentary by Vyāsa, the reputed author of the Vedānta Sūtras , on his own work. Likewise verses 2–3 seek to present the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as the ultimate text in the Purāṇa genre and nal word on all things Vedic. These opening verses need not detain the reader with no interest in such things.

Book I, Chapter 1

Oṁ Namo Bhāgavate Vāsudevāya

*(I o er obeisance to Lord Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva.)**

1. I meditate on the Supreme Truth. From Him come the creation,

maintenance, and destruction of this universe. 1 He is the self-

independent ruler, and knower of all things. He is omniscient due to his immanence in and transcendence beyond all things. By Him was

the Veda revealed to Brahmā,2 the rst sage, through the heart.

Even the wise are bewildered about the meaning of the Veda. In Him, the threefold creation [of sattva, rajas, and tamas3] appears to be real, like the mutual [illusory] appearance of re, water, and earth in each other [such as the mirage of water on land]. By His potency, illusion is always dispelled.

2. For the righteous, who are free of envy, the highest dharma is to be found in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, in which all dishonesty has been

rejected.4 Composed by the great sage [Vyāsa], only the real object of knowledge is revealed here, which bestows auspiciousness and

uproots the threefold miseries. 5 Is Īśvara immediately captured in the heart by anything else? In this text, He is captured in an instant

by the virtuous who desire to hear.

3. It is the succulent ripened fruit of the desire tree6 of the Vedic scriptures. It is permeated with the nectar owing from the mouth

of sage Śuka. 7 Aho! 8 O connoisseurs of poetic experience (rasa) and experts of poetic moods (bhāva), 9 while in this world drink continuously the spiritual avors (rasa) of the Bhāgavata to your full satisfaction.

The Setting of the Bhāgavata

Yoga Blueprint

The rst chapters in the text establish the frame narrative for the story, which is in fact a frame within a frame, as Sūta is relaying to the sages of Naimiṣa what he had previously heard Śuka narrate to the king (just as the Bhagavad Gītā is actually Sañjaya relaying to king Dhṛtarāṣṭra what Kṛṣṇa had narrated to Arjuna). So the various chapters in the Bhāgavata can switch from one frame to the other.

The following three chapters essentially establish what the goal of life and the purpose of human existence are, according to the Bhāgavata—

what questions should be asked for those interested in ultimate truths, in short, what one should do with the ever active mind. This section contains some of the key verses fundamental to the Kṛṣṇa-speci c theology discussed in the chapter "The Object of Bhakti: Īśvara , Bhagavān , Brahman , and Divine Hierarchies" : the three levels of Brahman , the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa over all other Īśvara incarnations, and the radical reinterpretation of dharma. Most important, too, is that the text situates itself as a literary substitute for Kṛṣṇa for those born after His incarnation.

Book I, Chapter 1

4. Once, in Naimiṣa, a place sacred to Lord Viṣṇu, the sages, headed

by Śaunaka, were performing a thousand-year sacri ce for the

purpose of attaining Viṣṇu's divine realm.10

5. One day, those sages, when they had completed their morning oblations into the sacred re, respectfully posed these questions to

the sage Sūta, who had been comfortably given a seat with due hospitality.

6. The sages asked:

“O faultless Sūta: it is said that you have not only deeply studied but

also explained the Purāṇas, ancient legendary accounts; the Itihāsa, epic traditions; as well as the texts on dharma, codes of conduct. 11

7. O Sūta! These are all understood by the great Vyāsa,12 the highest authority on the Veda, as well as by other sages, knowers of the higher and lower truths. 13

8. By their grace, you know all those sacred texts perfectly, O gentle

sage! Teachers speak of even the most intimate things to their a ectionate students.

9. O long-lived one! Please explain to us the single-most highest good for a person, as far as you have ascertained this from all these

various sources.

10. O noble one! People in this age of Kali 14 are generally short-lived, lazy, dull-witted, illfated, and oppressed.

11. There are a multitude of scriptures with varied sections

prescribing a wide variety of activities. Therefore, O saint, for the

bene t of living entities, kindly extract the essence from them with

your insight and express that to us, so that the mind can become peaceful.

12. O Sūta, may all good fortune be with you! You know with what

intention Bhagavān, the Lord of the Sātvatas, took birth from Vasudeva in the womb of Devakī.

13. You should kindly describe this to us, dear Sūta: we are eager to

hear about Kṛṣṇa's incarnation (avatāra) for the happiness and welfare of living beings.

14. A helpless person fallen into this terrifying saṁsāra (cycle of birth and death) is immediately liberated from it upon taking His Name. Fear itself fears Him.

15. The peaceful sages who have taken shelter of His feet purify instantly when others come in contact with them, whereas the

waters of the Gaṅgā purify only through repeated service [such as ritual bathing]. 15

16. What person, desiring to become pure, would not listen to the

wonders of Bhagavān—His deeds are praised in verses that purify the mind and destroy the impurities of the age of Kali.16

17. His amazing deeds are recounted by the wise. He is continually

assuming incarnations playfully. Tell us about Him; we have faith.

18. Narrate to us the auspicious stories of the incarnations (avatāra) of Hari, O wise Sūta. Īśvara engages in līlā 17 pastimes out of His free will, by means of His own māyā 18 potency.

19. We never become satiated by the deeds of Kṛṣṇa

(Uttamaślloka),19 they manifest increasing sweetness at every step for the connoisseurs of rasa 20 who listen to them.

20. Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa (Keśava) performed superhuman activities along with Balarāma, 21 concealed in the guise of a human being.

21. After realizing that the Kali age has arrived, we are seated here in this place for [the performance of] this long sacri ce; we have plenty of time for narrations about Hari.

22. Like the helmsman of a boat on an ocean, You have been

brought to us by Providence. We are eager to traverse the ocean of

the age of Kali, which destroys the good qualities (sattva) of people and is di cult to surpass.

23. Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of Yoga (Yogeśvara) and protector of the brāhmaṇas and sacred texts. Now that He has returned to his own

[transcendent] abode, please tell us: Where has dharma gone for safekeeping?”

Book I, Chapter 2

1. Vyāsa said:

“Sūta, the son of Romaharṣaṇa, was very pleased with the questions of the brāhmaṇas. After honoring their words, he set about replying.”

2. Sūta said:

“When Śuka gave up all duties and was leaving home without

undergoing his education, his father, Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, 22 pained by feelings of separation, called after him: ‘O son!’ But only the trees,

who were absorbed in the same mood as Śuka, echoed in response. I

bow to that sage (Śuka), who is the well-wisher of all living beings.

3. I accept that son of Vyāsa, the guru of the sages, as my guide. Out of compassion for those in saṁsāra, he spoke, from his own personal realization, the most intimate of the Purāṇas (the Bhāgavata).23 It is the essence of all the revealed scriptures, and the only spiritual light for those seeking to cross beyond deep darkness (tamas).

4. One should recite the Bhāgavata after o ering respects to Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the best of men; 24 to Sarasvatī, the Goddess of

learning; and to Vyāsa.

5. O sages! You have posed the perfect questions to me about the

welfare of the world. It is through questions about Kṛṣṇa that the mind becomes completely satis ed.

6. The highest dharma is that through which bhakti for Kṛṣṇa (Adhokṣaja) [is born].25 And it is through bhakti— performed without motive and uninterrupted—that the mind becomes

completely satis ed.

7. Bhakti yoga performed for Bhagavān Vāsudeva quickly bestows detachment (vairāgya) and causeless knowledge.

8. If dharma, howsoever perfectly performed, does not produce attraction for the stories of Kṛṣṇa (Viṣvaksena), then it is simply brute labor.

9. The goal of the dharma that leads to liberation is completely di erent from the dharma performed for the goal of material gain. 26

The goal of the dharma that is devoted to the One Supreme Being is not presented in the sacred texts as being desire for material gain.

10. The purpose of desire is not to ful ll the grati cation of the senses, but to ful ll only as much as is necessary to sustain life. And

the purpose of life in this world is to inquire into Truth, not to engage in actions dedicated to material gain (karma).

11. Those who know the Truth say that knowledge of that Truth is

nondual (advaya).27 It is named Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān. 28

12. The sages who have faith in this, and who are endowed with knowledge and detachment, perceive the ātman within themselves through the practice of bhakti presented in the sacred texts.

13. Thus, O best of the twice-born brāhmaṇas,29 the ultimate perfection of dharma, performed diligently by people according to the divisions of the varṇas and āśramas, 30 is the satisfaction of Hari.

14. Therefore, it is Bhagavān, the Lord of the Sātvatas, whom one should constantly hear about, glorify, meditate upon, and worship

with a concentrated mind.

15. Equipped with the sword of meditation, the wise sever the

bondage of the knot of karma. Who would not develop an attraction for narrations about Bhagavān?

16. For one who is faithful and desires to hear, attraction to the stories of Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] develops by means of service to the sages, assisting great saints, and dwelling in holy places.

17. To those who hear his narratives, Kṛṣṇa, who is the friend of the

Truthful and is situated within the heart, cleanses inauspicious things. Hearing about Him and performing His kīrtana 31 are purifying.

18. When almost all inauspicious things are destroyed by means of

constant service to the bhāgavatas, then unshakable bhakti for Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa (Uttamaśloka), manifests.

19. Then, the mind, situated in sattva and not being agitated by states of rajas and tamas, 32 nor by lust, greed, and so on, becomes content.

20. For one whose mind is content and who is free from attachment

[to all material things] by the practice of bhakti yoga in this way, realization of the Truth of Bhagavān is born.

21. When Īśvara is seen within oneself, 33 the knot in the heart is broken, all doubts are destroyed, and karma is weakened for that person.

22. Therefore, the poet-sages always engage in great ecstasy in bhakti for Bhagavān Vāsudeva, which satis es the mind.

23. Sattva, rajas, and tamas are the guṇas of prakṛti. There is one Supreme Being who directs these for the purpose of creation,

maintenance, and destruction of this universe. He is named Hari

[Viṣṇu], Viriñci [Brahmā], and Hara [Śiva]. From these, the highest

good is derived from the One whose form is sattva. 34

24. [Just as, for the performance of Vedic ritual,] smoke is higher

than wood, and re is higher than that, as it is the essential element

for the [rituals prescribed in the] three Vedas,35 [so] rajas is higher than tamas, and sattva is higher than that, as it bestows the vision of Brahman.

25. In the beginning, the sages worshipped Bhagavān Viṣṇu, who is pure sattva. Those who follow their example are eligible for liberation.

26. Those desiring liberation reject the ghastly forms of [other]

Lords of beings36 and, free from envy, worship the peaceful manifestations of Nārāyaṇa.

27. Those whose natures and characteristics are rājasic and tāmasic, desiring o spring, power, and opulence, worship such entities as the

ancestors, ghosts, and celestial beings.

28. Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] is the ultimate goal of the Veda, Vāsudeva is

the ultimate goal of ritual sacri ces, Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal

of yoga, Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of actions.

29. Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of knowledge, Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of austerity (tapas), Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal of dharma, Vāsudeva is the ultimate goal.

30. In the beginning, it was Bhagavān who, through His own māyā, which consists of the guṇas and takes the form of cause and e ect, created this world, even though He Himself is all-pervading and beyond the guṇas.

31. Radiating wisdom, He enters into these guṇas that have been manifest by māyā, and thus He appears as if endowed with the guṇas.

32. Just as re is one, but manifests as many when placed into pieces of wood, which are its sources, so does the Supreme Person,

the Soul of the Universe, manifest as many in the living entities.

33. He enters into the living entities created by Himself and then experiences the guṇas through the mind, senses, and gross and subtle elements, which are themselves the creations of the guṇas.

34. The Creator of the worlds maintains the worlds through sattva.

He is fond of assuming incarnations for play (līlā-avatāra) among beings such as the celestials, men, and animals."

Book I, Chapter 3

[A list of some of the previous primary incarnations prior to Kṛṣṇa's descent precedes.]

26. O brāhmaṇas! Just as many thousands of small channels ow from an inexhaustible lake, so are the avatāras of Hari, the abode of sattva, innumerable.

27. The sages, Manus,37 celestials, and sons of Manu, who are extremely powerful, are all only partial manifestations of Hari; so are those who are known as the procreators of species (prajāpatis).

28. All these [other incarnations] are secondary and derivative

manifestations of the Supreme Being. 38 Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān the Supreme Being Himself [that is, the source of all other divine manifestations]. 39 These incarnations bestow their grace on the world when it is troubled by the enemies of Indra. 40

29. A person who recounts the mysterious birth of Bhagavān with devotion in the morning and evening is freed from all sorts of su ering.

30. The form [the body] has been created by the guṇas, which are the māyā of Bhagavān, who has no material form. It is imposed on the ātman as intelligence and on the other layers as prakṛti.

31. Just as hosts of clouds exist in the sky, and earthly particles in

the wind, so the nature of the seen is imposed upon the seer by those who are not intelligent. 41

32. Beyond [the gross perceivable body] is a higher body which, because it cannot be seen or heard, is subtle. This is [formed] from

the guṇas prior to their evolution into solid matter. 42 It is because of this subtle body that the jīva (embodied soul), is born again.

33. When these two forms—one cause and one e ect43—which have been imposed on the ātman by ignorance (avidyā), are removed by realization, then the vision of Brahman manifests.

34. [The sages] know that if this skillful divine illusion (devī-māyā) ceases, then knowledge arises. When this occurs, the perfected

[soul] becomes glorious in its own majesty.

35. For this reason, the poet-sages describe the births and actions of

the One who is Unborn and does not act, the Lord of the heart.

These activities are not revealed in the Vedas. 44

36. His līlās are irresistible. He creates, sustains, and then devours this universe, but He is not attached to it. Self-dependent and situated within all beings, the Lord of six qualities, 45 experiences the

six senses [as the nose experiences] fragrances.46

37. Just as an ignorant person does not understand the behavior of

an actor, so no creature of limited intelligence can understand through words, mind, or cleverness the pastimes of the Supreme

Creator when He exhibits His names and forms.

38. The person who knows the ways of the unlimitedly powerful

Supreme Creator, wielder of the disc weapon (cakra), 47 is one who uninterruptedly and devoid of any deceit worships the fragrance of

His lotus feet. 48

39. Therefore, fortunate are the great souls who dedicate their whole heart and soul to Vāsudeva the Lord of all the worlds in this

way; they do not experience the terrible rounds of rebirth in this world.

40. The great sage Vyāsa composed this Purāṇa, called the

Bhāgavata, about the activities of Kṛṣṇa (Uttamaśloka), for the ultimate welfare of people. It is equal to the Vedas, bestows good

fortune, and is supremely auspicious.

41. Then he taught it to his son [Śuka], the most preeminent of those who have realized the ātman. It is the cream extracted from

the cream of all the Vedas and sacred histories.49

42. Śuka then narrated it to the great king Parīkṣit, who was seated on the banks of the Gaṅgā fasting to death, surrounded by the great sages.

43. Since Kṛṣṇa had departed to his personal divine abode along with knowledge and dharma, etc., this Purāṇa has now arisen like the sun for those who have lost their sight due to [the darkness of]

the age of Kali.

44. I arrived there at that place as the greatly e ulgent brāhmaṇa sage Śuka was reciting the Bhāgavata, O brāhmāṇas, and, by his kindness, I sat down there. I will retell it to you, to the best of my

understanding and re ection. 50

Book I, Chapter 4

1. Vyāsa said:

“Śaunaka was the senior leader of the assembly of sages who were performing that long sacri ce, and he was well-versed in the Vedas. He rst honored Sūta who was speaking in this way, and then spoke.”

2. Śaunaka said:

“Sūta, O greatly fortunate Sūta! Recount to us, O eminent speaker,

that pure narration about Bhagavān that was spoken by the noble Śuka.

3. In which age, in which place, with what motive, and inspired by

what did the sage Vyāsa compose this scripture?

4. His son, Śuka, is a great yogī who is beyond dualities and sees all equally [as Brahman]. He has overcome sleep, and goes around

[with his greatness] concealed, like a half-wit, his mind xed

exclusively on Truth.

5. When maidens [who were bathing] saw Vyāsa following his son

they covered themselves with clothes out of modesty, even though

Vyāsa was not naked; but they did not do so for the son [even though Śuka was naked]. When he saw this puzzling behavior, the

sage inquired about it. The maidens replied: ‘The discernment of male and female sexual di erences exists in you, but there is no such distinction in the perception of your son.’51

6. How was he recognized by the citizens, when he arrived in the

jungle areas of the Kuru kingdom? He was wandering around the

city called Hastināpura52 like a deranged, dumb half-wit.

7. How did the conversation between the sage-king of the Pāṇḍu dynasty (Parīkṣit) and sage Śuka take place? It was from this

conversation that this scripture sacred to Kṛṣṇa was produced.

8. That great soul Śuka waits at the houses of householders only for

as long as it takes to milk a cow, and even then he does so only to

transform that residence into a sacred place [by dint of his purity

and not for the purpose of begging milk]. 53

9. O Sūta! They say that Parīkṣit, the son of Abhimanyu, is a preeminent devotee (bhāgavata).54 Please relate to us the account of his extraordinary birth and deeds.

10. He was the supreme monarch, who increased the pride of the

Pāṇḍu family. For what reason did he renounce the opulence of the

emperorship and sit fasting to death on the banks of the Gaṅgā?

11. After bringing him tribute, his enemies o ered homage to his footstool for their own protection. How did that hero, O dear Sūta,

while in the prime of life, give up opulence, which is so hard to renounce, along with his own life?

12. Those people who are devoted to Uttamaśloka [Kṛṣṇa] live for

the protection, well-being, and prosperity of living beings, not for their own gain. Why did that king renounce his body, which

provided shelter to others, and abandon it?

13. Please relate everything to us that we have inquired about. I regard you as versed in all topics other than that related to the

Vedic hymns."55

The Tale of Vyāsa: Existential Malaise

Yoga Blueprint

This tale outlines the traditional Purāṇa narrative pertaining to the origin of the compilation of the Vedic corpus (the Śruti and Smṛti). The yogic message imparted here is that even though Vyāsa had mastered and compiled all manner of scriptures relating to the various goals of life, he remained unful lled since he had not described the līlās of Bhagavān .

For the Bhāgavata , it is only when the mind is absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa that it can attain the level of deep, ultimate, and permanent ful llment that it seeks. This is further underscored by the text noting that even sages who have fully realized the ātman , like Vyāsa's son Śuka, nonetheless nd their minds captured by the līlās of Bhagavān . As we know, this minimization of conventional mokṣa , liberation, is a major subtheme of the Bhāgavata and of Vaiṣṇavism in general.

Other noteworthy features in this narrative include the fact that Vyāsa has a vision of Kṛṣṇa in his meditations. Like all yoga traditions, the goal of bhakti is direct experience, in this case direct perception of the form of Kṛṣṇa.

Book 1, Chapter 4

14. During the period of the Dvāpara Yuga, toward the end of this third of the ages, sage Vyāsa, a partial incarnation of Vishnu, was

born of Parāśara and Vāsavī.

15. Once, as the sun's orb was rising, Vyāsa took a bath in the pure

waters of the Sarasvatī river and sat down alone in a secluded place.

16. The sage, who could see past and future, perceived that

behavior contrary to the dharma of the age (yuga) had begun to manifest. This decline occurs on earth every yuga 56 owing to the imperceptible force of Time.

17.–18. The sage saw with his divine vision[57] the decrease in ability (śakti) in both body and mind wrought by this change. He saw the wretched state of people: their life spans had become reduced, their

intelligence decreased, and they lacked faith and potency. So that

sage of perfect vision began to contemplate the welfare of all the stages and professions of life (varṇāśrama).

19. He saw that the Vedic rituals performed by the four specialist

priests (hotṛs)[58] were purifying for people, and so, for the propagation of sacri cial performance, he divided the one Veda into

four.

20. The four Vedas— Ṛg, Sāman, Yajus, and Atharvan—were extracted [from the one original], and the epics and Purāṇas were

named the fth Veda.

21. From these, Paila became responsible for the Ṛg-Veda, sage Jaimini became the chanter of the Sāma-Veda, while Vaiśampāyana

alone became expert in the Yajur-Veda.

22. The intense sage Sumantu was given the Atharva-Veda, which is associated with the Aṅgiras, and my father, Romaharṣaṇa, the epics

and Purāṇas.

23. Those sages each divided up their own respective Veda into several through their disciples, grand-disciples, and their subsequent

students, so those Vedas developed many branches.

24. Bhagavān Vyāsa[59] is compassionate to the less capable and thus made those Vedas easy to memorize for people of less intelligence. [60]

25. Women, śūdras (the laborer caste), and fallen brāhmaṇas are ineligible for Vedic study.61 For the bene t of those who have no access to knowledge about how to act in the world in a way that leads to their ultimate welfare, the great story of Bhārata (the Mahābhārata epic) was composed by the sage.

26. Despite this, the heart of the sage, devoted as he was to the welfare of living beings by all possible means, was still not satis ed,

O twice-born sage.

27. His heart dissatis ed, that expert in dharma, sitting alone on the pure banks of the Sarasvatī deliberating over this, uttered these words:

28. "Upholding my vows, I have respected the sacred chants, gurus, and ritual re, and I have upheld the sacred teachings.

29. And the ancient doctrines have been disclosed in the form of the

Mahābhārata epic, through which this dharma has been made accessible to women, śūdras, and others.

30. Unfortunately, despite all this, and despite the fact that I am the

most preeminent of all the brāhmaṇas, my embodied ātman, which has attained perfection, appears to be unful lled.

31. Perhaps this is because the bhāgavata dharmas62 have barely been disclosed. They are dear to the infallible lord Kṛṣṇa, and dear

to the paramahaṁsa perfected beings." 63

32. As Vyāsa was lamenting and re ecting on his inadequacies in this manner, Nārada arrived at his āśrama, 64 which was described previously.

33. When he realized that Nārada, who is honored by the celestials,

had arrived, the sage immediately arose and honored him according

to due protocol.

Book 1, Chapter 5

1. Sūta said:

“When he was comfortably seated, his vīṇā stringed instrument in hand, the celebrated celestial sage spoke to Vyāsa, who had sat down nearby.”

2. Nārada said:

“O greatly fortunate son of Parāśara, are you self-satis ed in body

and mind?

3. Everything you desired to know has been fully accounted for: you

compiled the wonderful epic of the Bhāratas, which is replete with

all the arthas (the goals of human life).65

4. And you understood whatever you desired to know about that

eternal Brahman. Yet, despite all this, You lament your situation, as if your goals had not been attained, O master!”

5. Vyāsa said:

“I attained everything you just described, yet still my mind is not content. So may I ask you about the underlying cause of this? You

have profound intelligence, and are the son of Brahmā [the most intelligent being in the universe].

6. That primordial Person is the controller of the great and the small. He has no attachments, yet He creates the universe from His

mind, and then maintains and destroys it by means of the guṇas.

Because you have worshipped Him, your honor knows all hidden

things.

7. Traveling around, you move about within the three worlds like

the sun, and like the wind, you are the witness of the mind. Reveal

to me the cause of my malaise—even though I am initiated into knowledge of the higher and lower Brahman [matter and spirit]

according to the traditional teachings."66

8. Śrī Nārada said:

"Sir, for the most part,67 you have not described the pure glory of Bhāgavan. I consider any philosophy which does not satisfy the Lord to be barren.

9. You have not described the greatness of Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] to the

same extent that you have glori ed the four [mundane] goals of life

— dharma, righteous conduct; artha, material well-being; kāma, satisfaction of desires; and mokṣa, liberation.

10. The glory of Hari puri es the world. Those who dwell in the lovely abode [of Kṛṣṇa bhakti] do not nd those words which do not describe the glory of Hari attractive, even if they are replete with

literary embellishments—just as the swans from the celestial Mānasa

lake do not dwell in the ponds frequented by crows.

11. But that composition that contains [the sacred] names denoting

the glory of the unlimited Lord destroys the sins of the people, even

if every verse is improperly composed. Saints hear, recite, and glorify these names.

12. Even pure knowledge of the ātman free of desire does not illuminate if devoid of love for Acyuta, the infallible Lord—what then to speak of karma, action, which is always inauspicious, even if it is free of self-centered motive.

13. O great soul, you have infallible vision, your reputation is spotless, you adhere to truth, and you are true to your vows. Recall,

by means of samādhi vision, the activities of Kṛṣṇa, who frees one from all bondage.

14. Unfortunately, desiring to speak of other unrelated things, your

focus became distracted away [from Kṛṣṇa]. But your mind,

distracted by names and forms (nāma-rūpa),68 can never gain tranquillity by any other means whatsoever; it becomes like a boat

swept away by the wind.

15. You have made a serious oversight in teaching things in the name of dharma that are detrimental to people who are by nature

inclined to ful lling desires. Most people will think: 'That which has

been uttered [by Vyāsa] is authorized dharma.' They will not pay heed to any other point of view. 69

16. A wise sage, who is detached from actions, is quali ed to understand the blissful nature of the unlimited Supreme Lord. But

for those whose minds are attached to actions and who are ignorant

of their ātman because of the in uence of the guṇas, you, dear sir, should disclose the activities of the Lord.

17. If a neophyte, after renouncing conventional duties (dharma) falls down [from the standards] while worshipping the lotus feet of

Hari, what harm is there in that for him? On the other hand, what

[ultimate] bene t is attained for one following his duties without such worship?

18. Therefore, a wise person should strive for that objective, which

is transcendent to [mundane] happiness, and so which is not

attainable by wandering about in the higher and lower [realms of

the universe]. After all, mundane happiness, just like distress, is available everywhere in the due course of relentless Time.

19. A person who serves Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa] will certainly never

again return to saṁsāra, dear Vyāsa. A person who has experienced the nectar (rasa) of remembering the embrace of the feet of Mukunda will never wish to relinquish them again.

20. This entire universe is Bhagavān, in one sense, but also di erent.

From Him creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe

occurs. You, of course, know this, but, still, I have indicated just this much as an illustration [for what you must now describe].

21. O infallible seer, you should describe in detail the wonderful glories of the Supreme Being! You yourself know that you are a partial incarnation (kalā)70 of the Supreme Person and highest soul (parama-ātman). Although unborn, He has taken birth for the welfare of the world.

22. It is this, the description of the qualities of the Lord, that has

been described by poet-sages as the eternal goal of a person's charity, knowledge, recital of Vedic hymns, performance of ritual sacri ce, hearing from sacred texts, and austerities. His glories are

supreme."

Book I, Chapter 7

[Here follows the Tale of Sage Nārada.]

1. Śaunaka said:

“After Nārada had departed, O Sūta, what did the great esteemed Bādarāyaṇa (Vyāsa) do, after hearing his suggestion?”

2. Sūta said:

“On the West bank of the Sarasvatī, the river sacred to the brāhmaṇas, there is a hermitage (āśrama) known as Śamyāprāsa, which is a conducive place for the sages to perform sacri ces.

3. Vyāsa seated himself there, in his āśrama surrounded by a grove of jujube trees, consecrated himself with water, and began to

concentrate his mind.

4. His mind had been completely puri ed by the practice of bhakti

yoga. When it was in a state of full concentration, Vyāsa had a vision of Kṛṣṇa, the perfect Person, along with His māyā power, which is His assistant.

5. Although the jīva is transcendent, he is bewildered by that māyā, and considers himself to be a product of the three guṇas. As a result, he falls victim to the undesirable consequences resulting from this

[saṁsāra].

6. The learned Vyāsa then composed the Bhāgavata Purāṇa for the

mass of people who do not know that bhakti yoga dedicated to Adhokṣaja [Kṛṣṇa], directly mitigates su ering.

7. Indeed, bhakti for Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Being (parama-puruṣa), removes sorrow, illusion, and fear from people. It is awakened by

hearing the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

8. After writing and arranging this scripture dedicated to Bhagavān, the sage instructed it to his son, Śuka, who was absorbed in

renunciation.”

9. Śaunaka said:

“The sage Śuka was absorbed in renunciation and indi erent to

everything else; He was immersed in the bliss of his own ātman. So why would he have undertaken the study of this huge literature?”

10. Sage Śaunaka replied:

“The fact that sages, who are without worldly bonds and delight in

the ātman self, perform devotion to Hari free from all motive is because of the nature of Hari’s qualities.

11. This is why Śuka, son of Bādarāyaṇa, studied this great

narration, which is dear to the devotees of Viṣṇu: his mind had become captured by the qualities of Hari.

12. Now I will speak to you about the birth, deeds, and death of King Parīkṣit, and about the death of the sons of Pāṇḍu, since these

will create an opportunity to recount narrations about Kṛṣṇa.”

The Tale of Sage Nārada: The Maidservant’s Son

Yoga Blueprint

We see from the section on his previous birth that even Nārada, the greatest sage of them all, was once a lusty, arrogant person, just like anybody else. Moreover, despite being born in a situation not considered particularly conducive to yoga practice, he nonetheless found opportunity to pursue the goals of life outlined in the Bhāgavata, which he not only attained, but in which he became preeminent—Nārada is considered one of the twelve mahājānas , great bhāgavatas , who alone fully understand bhakti . 71 The yogic message here is that in accordance with the Gitā (IX.30–32), no one is disquali ed by caste, race, gender, or past behaviors from attaining the supreme goal of life; social demarcations are irrelevant to bhakti yoga.

The other main teaching imparted in this narrative is the importance of association with and service to the great bhaktas for the beginning impetus of an individual’s devotional journey (see “The First Step in Bhakti : Association with a Bhakta ”). The rst seeds of bhakti are planted by association with and service to those who already have attained an

attraction for the stories of Kṛṣṇa. It was by the blessings of the ascetic sages that Nārada's own seed of bhakti was planted.

Additionally, we see in 5.38 the idea of sonic incarnation. Mantras, such as the one we encounter in 5.37, are not symbols or signi ers, but divine presences—transubstantiated sounds. Also, we see in this narrative, as elsewhere, that the practice of bhakti leads to a direct vision of God (6.16). Finally, we nd a reference in I.6.28 to the spiritual body—made of Brahman stu , rather than prakṛti, bestowed on bhaktas upon gaining the realm of Vaikuṇṭha.

***Book VII, Chapter 15**72*

[Nārada's previous birth. Note: We brie y interrupt the sequencing of the Bhāgavata here to present Nārada's lives in chronological order.]

69. Nārada said:

“In a previous existence, in an age long past, I was a certain gandharva celestial[73] known as Upabarhaṇa. I was highly regarded among the gandharvas.

70. I was handsome, attractive, perfumed, pleasing to look at, and

very appealing to the ladies. I was always intoxicated and engaged

in satisfying my lust in my own city.

71. Once, the hosts of celestial gandharvas and apsarās[74] were invited by the Prajāpatis (celestial progenitors) to a ritual sacri ce conducted by the gods, for chanting the glories of Hari.

72. Learning of this, I too went along there, surrounded by women

and singing. Considering that an o ense, the progenitors cursed me

by dint of their ascetic power: ‘Because you have committed an o ense, you will lose your beauty and immediately enter into the state of a śūdra.’

73. As a result, I was born in the womb of a servant lady. But, even

in that life, through the association and service of those conversant

with Vedic knowledge, I attained the state of being the son of Brahmā.”

Book I, Chapter 5

[Nārada relates his subsequent birth to Vyāsa.]

23. Nārada said:

“As for me, O sage, in a previous age, I was born of a certain maidservant to sages learned in the Vedas. Although I was only a boy, I was appointed to serve the yogīs, since they were planning to

live together during the rainy season.75

24. Although those sages looked upon everyone impartially, they

bestowed their kindness upon me, a young boy. I was free of all ckleness, disciplined, obedient, not interested in playing games, and I spoke sparingly.

25. I was permitted by the sages to eat the remnants of whatever food they had left over, and ate this once daily. From doing so, all

my sins were destroyed.76 Engaged in this manner, my mind became puri ed, and a strong personal interest in their religion grew in me.

26. As a result of this, thanks to their kindness, I kept on listening to the captivating narrations of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes that they were

reciting. Listening attentively to every word of those narrations with

faith, an attraction for Kṛṣṇa arose in me. Hearing about Him is so

pleasing to the heart.

27. Consequently, once I had developed this attraction, my mind became rmly xed in Kṛṣṇa; narratives about Him are so satisfying,

O great sages! As a result of this, I could perceive that due to my

illusion, I had imagined this gross and subtle reality [of the body and mind] to be the real me. But I am actually the Supreme

Brahman.77

28. In this manner, bhakti, which diminishes rajas and tamas, grew within me, as I constantly listened to the pure glories of Hari that

were being recited by the great-souled sages over the course of the

rainy season and the autumn season.

29.–30. I was their servant—a boy who was attached to them,

humble, free from sin, faithful, and disciplined—and they were

compassionate on the less fortunate. So, as they were about to depart, those sages, out of kindness instructed me in that intimate

knowledge of bhakti by which God Himself is revealed.

31. I came to understand the potency of Vāsudeva from that

knowledge. He is Bhagavān, the Creator. By this knowledge, people can attain His divine abode.

32. O brāhmaṇas! Bhagavān is Īśvara— Brahman. It has been stated

[in the sacred texts] that whatever act is performed for Him is the

medicine for the threefold miseries of embodied existence. 78

33. O sages who always uphold your vows! That which causes

disease for living beings cannot [under normal circumstances] be the remedy for that very disease. But it can cure when used as medicine.

34. In the same way, the performance of all actions, which normally are the causes of bondage for people, become capable of destroying

themselves, when performed for the Supreme.79

35. The knowledge associated with bhakti yoga is clearly based on those kinds of actions in this world, which are performed for the satisfaction of Bhagavān.

36. Wherever people are always performing actions according to the

teachings of the Bhāgavata, they absorb themselves in the names and qualities of Kṛṣṇa and remember Him constantly.

37. Oṁ namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya ('Reverences to you, Bhagavān Vāsudeva'). Reverences to Pradyumna, Aniruddha, and

Saṅkarṣaṇa. 80

38. The Lord of worship (sacri ce) is without material form, but He

takes the form of mantras. By worshipping Him by means of the forms of these names, a person becomes a sage and his or her perception becomes perfect.

39. O brāhmaṇa! Seeing that I was following the instructions of His scriptures, Keśava [Kṛṣṇa] bestowed upon me knowledge, mystic

powers, and devotion for Him.

40. O master! Your learning is vast. You should also impart these teachings. They satiate the desire of the wise to seek knowledge! For

those who seek to remove the sorrows from all those constantly tormented by su ering, there is no other means."

Book I, Chapter 6

1. After he had heard about the birth and actions of Nārada, the sage of the celestials, the powerful Vyāsa, son of Satyavatī, asked him more questions, O brāhmaṇa.

2. Vyāsa said:

“After those mendicants who instructed you in spiritual knowledge

had departed, what did you then do, sir, being still at that early age

of life?

3. O son of the self-manifest Brahmā, 81 how did you live your later life? How did you give up your body, when the Time came?

4. O best of the sages, Time erases all things! How is it that it did

not cover your memory of these events which were from a previous

world age?”

5. Nārada replied:

“This is what happened after the mendicants who had instructed me

in spiritual knowledge had departed. I was still a child at the time.

6. My mother was a maidservant and knew nothing of spiritual

truths, and I was her only son. She bound me with bonds of

a ection, as I was her son and had no other shelter.

7. She was not self-su cient and so, although she wished to do so,

she was not able to provide for my maintenance. After all, people

are under the control of God, like wooden dolls.

8. As a boy of ve years, I had no sense of time, place, or direction,

and lived in that dwelling of the brāhmaṇas bracing for what was to come.

9. One day, instigated by the force of Time, a snake on the path bit

the poor woman, touched by her foot when she went out of the house at night to milk the cow.

10. So, accepting this as the mercy of God, who is always desiring

the well-being of his devotees, I then set out toward the northern direction. [*82*]

11. On my way, I passed through prosperous countries, cities,

villages, cattle-herding communities, mines, agricultural villages, hill villages, forests, and groves.

12. [I saw] wonderful mountains replete with various minerals,

trees with their branches broken by elephants, and reservoirs of water. There were lotus ponds of pure water that were frequented

by celestials and beauti ed by buzzing bees and the charming

sounds of birds.

13. Traveling alone in this way, I saw a great forest. It had caves, hollow bamboos and other types of bamboos, kuśa grass, clumps of reeds, and nala grasses. It was terrifying and dangerous—the stalking grounds of jackals, owls, and snakes.

14. I was exhausted in body and mind, a icted by thirst, and

hungry. I bathed and then drank from the lake of a river. After sipping water, my fatigue dissipated.

15. That forest was unfrequented by humans. I took shelter of a pippala tree within it and sat beneath it. I concentrated my mind on the Supreme Soul who was within me, as I had heard [from the instructions of the sages].

16. As I was meditating on His lotus feet, with my mind

overwhelmed with love, and my eyes ooded with tears of longing,

Hari gradually appeared in my heart.

17. The hair on my body stood on end due to being overwhelmed

with excessive love. I was utterly satiated, O sage. Immersed in a ood of ecstasy, I was unable to perceive both [myself and Hari] at

the same time.

18. That form of God, Bhagavān, is most pleasing to the mind, and removes all sorrows. When I could no longer perceive it, I rose up,

my mind thrown into despondency over this loss.

19. Desiring to see that form, I again concentrated my mind in my

heart. Although I was focused, I could not see it again, and so despaired, like a distressed person.

20. The Lord, who is beyond the range of the senses, spoke these words to me as I was struggling in that desolate place. His voice was

deep but gentle, as if to assuage my grief:

21. 'I'm afraid that in this life, you are not ready to see me again. A

vision of Me is di cult to attain by imperfect yogīs whose impurities have not been cleansed.

22. That form which was revealed to you once by My grace, O

sinless one, was for the purpose [of increasing] your desire. Desire

for me most certainly frees one from all material desires lying latent in the heart.

23. By dint of your lengthy service to the saints, your heart became

xed on Me. Therefore, when you leave this world of ignorance, you

will proceed to become My associate [in Vaikuṇṭha]. 83

24. Your mind which has been absorbed in Me will never deviate.

By My grace, you will retain your memory, despite the cycles of creation and destruction.'

25. Having said this, that great Being fell silent. He is Īśvara, God,

[the Creator of] the manifest and unmanifest prakṛti, the sky, and all elements. I o ered my obeisance to Him, the greatest of the great,

by bowing my head to the ground. I had been blessed.

26. My distraught state of mind evaporated. After that, I wandered

around the earth awaiting Time in the form of Death, while reciting

the names of the In nite Lord, and contemplating His mysterious and wonderful deeds. My mind was satis ed, all my desires were gone, and I was freed from all pride and envy.

27. In this way, with my intelligence xed on Kṛṣṇa, O brāhmaṇa, with pure mind and free of all attachments, Death in the form of Time appeared at its allotted time, like a ash of Saudāmanī

lightning. 84

28. As I was attaining a pure Bhāgavata body,85 my gross body made of the ve elements fell away, its accumulated karma extinguished.

29. Then, through his breath, I entered Brahmā, who desired to lie

down with Lord Viṣṇu. He did this at the end of that particular kalpa world cycle, as Viṣṇu lay on the waters of the Kāraṇa ocean after withdrawing this universe within Himself. 86

30. At the end of a thousand yuga ages, Brahmā awoke, desiring to create. I along with various sages such as Marīci, was then born from his breath.

31. Without ever breaking my vows, I wandered around both within

and beyond the three worlds. By the grace of Lord Viṣṇu, my

movements were unimpeded.87

32. I wander about singing of the deeds of Hari and playing on this

vīṇā stringed instrument bestowed on me by the Lord, which is distinctive by emitting the sound of Brahman (oṁ).

33. The Lord, whose feet are holy places of pilgrimage,88 and whose great deeds are relishable, suddenly appeared in my mind, as if He

had been called.

34. It is well-known that describing the activities of Hari is the boat

for crossing over the ocean of saṁsāra for those whose minds are constantly a icted by desire for material enjoyment.

35. The mind, which is constantly assailed by lust and greed, is not

as paci ed by the paths of yoga consisting of the yamas, etc., as it is by service to Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa].

36. O sinless one! Whatever your honor asked me about the

mysteries of my birth and activities, I have completely recounted to

your mind's satisfaction."

37. Sūta said:

“After speaking this to Vyāsa, the son of Satyavatī, the great sage Nārada bade him farewell and then departed, spreading joy with his

vīṇā. He had no personal goals to ful ll.

38. Aho! 89 How blessed is this sage of the celestials! While singing the glories of Viṣṇu, whose bow is made from horn, and

experiencing bliss himself, he also gives delight to this a icted world with his stringed instrument.

The Tale of Dhṛtarāṣṭra: The Blind Emperor’s Final Days

Yoga Blueprint

This narrative pertains to events connected to the great Mahābhārata war. We can recall Vyāsa composes the Bhāgavata after he had nished compiling the epic pertaining to the developments surrounding this. The Bhāgavata does, on occasion, refer back to events in the epic, but only insofar as they are relevant to narrations concerning to Kṛṣṇa bhakti , as per the mandate it sets for itself.

The main yogic message of this passage is that irrespective of whether one has led a compromised life, as certainly was the case with King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and irrespective of how old and in rm one is, it is imperative that, at least at the end of life, one renounce all attachments and x the mind on Kṛṣṇa before death strips one of this opportunity and the goal of human life.

Book I, Chapter 13

1. Sūta said:

“After Vidura had received knowledge about the destination of the

ātman from Maitreya while he was traveling to places of pilgrimage, he arrived at the city of Hastināpura.90 He had received what he had desired to know.

2. Although while Maitreya was with him Vidura had posed

questions to him, he later desisted from asking them once exclusive

devotion to Govinda became manifest [in his heart].

3.–5. When they saw Vidura arriving, O brāhmaṇa, Yudhiṣṭhira, the son of Dharma, along with his brothers, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Yuyutsu,

Sañjaya, and Kṛpa, as well as Kuntī, Gāndhārī, Draupadī, Subhadrā,

Uttarā, Kṛpī, and the rest of the womenfolk of the Pāṇḍava clan accompanied by other women with their children and in the

company of relatives, all joyfully surged forth toward him, like a body when its life airs return. They approached him and embraced

him in accordance with the appropriate protocol.

6. They shed abundant tears of love, as they had su ered in his absence due to missing him. After Vidura had accepted the seat arranged for him, King Yudhiṣṭhira honored him.

7. After Vidura had enjoyed food, rested, and taken a seat on a comfortable couch, the king, his head bowed with respect,

questioned him while everyone was listening.

8. Yudhiṣṭhira said:

‘Do you still remember us, who used to prosper under the shelter of

your protection? We were saved along with our mothers from a host

of dangers such as poison and re, etc. 91

9. When the main holy places of the world were graced by your good self traveling about the earth [on pilgrimage], how did you sustain yourself?

10. Devotees such as you have themselves become places of

pilgrimage, O master. With Lord Viṣṇu, the holder of the club, situated within your heart, it is you who make holy places holy.

11. Did you see our well-wishers, O dear Vidura, and our relatives,

whose Lord is Kṛṣṇa? And did you see whether the Yādavas are

residing happily in their city?’

12. After he had been addressed in this way by Yudhiṣṭhira, king of

Dharma, Vidura described everything that he had experienced, step

by step—everything except for the news about the destruction of the

Yadu dynasty.

13. Vidura was kind, and could not bear to see them distressed—

after all, unpalatable and undesirable events appear of their own accord for human beings.

14. Vidura then resided there happily for a period of time, well treated like a god. He bestowed the highest good on his elder brother Dhṛitarāṣṭra, and brought happiness to everyone.

15. For the duration of the one hundred years that Yama had to endure the state of being [born] a śūdra [as Vidura] because of a curse, Aryamā

wielded the rod of punishment on those who

performed misdeeds [in his place].92

16. Yudhiṣṭhira, the sovereign of the kingdom, witnessed [the birth

of] his grandson, Parīkṣit, who was to perpetuate the dynasty. He enjoyed unparalleled opulence with his brothers, the guardians of all the directions.

17. In this manner, insurmountable Time, unnoticed, overtakes those who are attached to their households, and deluded by their desire to enjoy them.

18. Noticing this, Vidura spoke to Dhṛtarāṣṭhra: 'O king, you must

depart immediately. Just see the fear [of Time in the form of imminent death] that is approaching!

19. There is no remedial measure through any means from any

quarter against this Time, O master. It is God himself and arrives for

us all!

20. When overpowered by Time, people are immediately separated

from their very life airs, which are their dearest possession—what to

speak of other possessions, such as wealth, etc.!

21. Your father, brother, friends, and sons are dead, and your own

life span has expired. Your body has been grasped by old age, and

you live in someone else's home.

22. You are blind from birth, 93 you are now deaf, and your intellect is feeble. Your teeth are loose, your digestive re is weak, and you

cough up mucus noisily.

23. Aho! Just see how strong is the hope for life of living beings like you, sir! 94 You are accepting the remnants discarded by Bhīma, like a household dog. 95

24. What is the worth of a life given in charity by those very people

whom you doused with re, to whom you administered poison,

whose wife you violated, and whose property and wealth you

seized? 96

25. Even though you desire to live, this body of a miserly person like you will perish against your will, worn out by old age, like a set

of clothes.

26. One is said to be wise when, unattached and free from the bondage of karma, one gives up this body in a secluded place after it has become useless for the attainment of one's goals.

27. One in control of the self due to the awakening of detachment, either as a result of one's own e orts or [the guidance of] others,

who leaves the household and wanders forth after xing Hari in the

heart, is eminent among people.

28. Therefore, sir, leave for the northern direction97 without disclosing your destination to your relatives. Inviolable Time, which

is now approaching, strips away the qualities of men.'

29. Enlightened in this way by his younger brother Vidura, the king,

descendant of Ajamīḍha, 98 whose intellect served as his eyes [since he was blind], severed the bonds of a ection for his relatives, and

resolutely set forth on the path indicated by his brother.

30. Gāndhārī, the daughter of Subala, a true wife faithful to her husband, followed her husband as he was departing for the

Himālayas. These mountains give pleasure to those who have taken

up the sta of the renounced order,99 just like a good battle gives

pleasure to the brave.100

31. Meanwhile, Yudhiṣṭhira, who was without enemies, performed

prayers to the sun and o ered oblations to the re. After honoring

the brāhmaṇas with gifts of sesame, cows, land, and gold, he entered his house to o er respects to his guru. But he did not nd his uncles or Gāndhārī there.

32. His mind became full of concern, and he inquired from Sañjaya,

who was sitting there: 'O son of Gavalgaṇa, where is our beloved uncle? He is old and bereft of sight.

33. And our aunt, who is desolate because of her slain sons?101 And where has our well-wisher, Uncle Vidura, gone? He is distressed on

account of his relatives being slain. Has he, fearing harm from a fool

like me, thrown himself into the Gaṅgā river along with his wife?

34. When our father, Pāṇḍu, died, our two uncles protected all of us

small children, their relatives, from dangers. Where have they gone

now?'"

35. Sūta said:

“Sañjaya, not nding his master, became distraught due to separation from them, and overwhelmed with a ection and

compassion. He was so disturbed that he could not answer.

36. Wiping his tears with his hands as he thought of the feet of his

master, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, he nally replied to Yudhiṣṭhira, controlling his

mind with his intelligence.

37. ‘I do not know the decision made by your uncles, O delight of

the dynasty, nor of Gāndhārī. I have been deceived by those two great souls, O mighty armed one.’

38. At that moment, the great sage Nārada arrived, accompanied by

the sage Tumburu. After arising from their seats, and worshipping

him along with his younger brothers, Yudhiṣṭhira said:

39. ‘I do not know the whereabouts of my uncles, O sage: where have they gone? And my austere aunt who was distraught by the death of her sons: where has she gone?

40. You are the captain of the ship, O Lord, which can convey us to

the other side of the ocean (of grief).’102 At this, sage Nārada, the best of the sages, replied:

41. ‘O king, do not grieve for anything: the world is under the control of Īśvara. He is the Controller. All these worlds with their guardian deities o er worship to Him, as it is He who unites and separates living creatures.

42. Just as cows are pierced through the nose by a cord, and then

bound together by ropes, so, bound by cords in the form of the words of the Vedic injunctions, beings conduct worship to the

Controller.

43. Just as in this world the bringing together and separating of game pieces might take place through the will of the player, so in

the same way the bringing together and separating of human beings

takes place through the will of the Lord.

44. Whether you consider beings to be eternal, non-eternal, or both,

they should not be mourned in any circumstance. To do so is the

result of attachment born of ignorance.

45. Therefore, my son, give up your distress. It is caused by ignorance of the ātman, and it is because of this that you are thinking: "But they are helpless and without protection: How can they survive without me?!"

46. This body, made of the ve elements, is itself subject to the guṇas, karma, and Time. How can it, then, protect others any more than one grasped by a python can protect others?

47. One living being is the means of sustenance for another: those

without hands, for those with hands; those without feet, for those

with four feet; and the weak for the strong.

48. This universe is Bhagavān, the sole ātman among ātmans, O king.

He is self-manifest—manifesting both within and without [of all

things]. Know that it is only on account of His māyā power of illusion that He appears to be manifold.

49. O great king, He, the Creator of all beings, is none other than

this Bhagavān [Kṛṣṇa]. He has incarnated into this world in the form of Time for the destruction of the enemies of the celestials.

50. Īśvara has accomplished that which was to be done on behalf of the celestials, and is expecting [to complete] whatever remains. 103

As long as he remains on this earth, you should witness [his

activities].

51. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, accompanied by his brother and his wife, Gāndhārī,

has gone to the āśrama of the sages, on the south side of the Himālayas.

52. The place is called Sapta-śrota (Seven Rivers), because the Gaṅgā divided sevenfold into seven rivers for the satisfaction of the seven di erent sages. 104

53. Observing a fast of only drinking water, he bathes three times a

day, o ers oblations into the sacred re according to the prescribed

rules, and remains there with a peaceful mind, free of desires.

54. He has mastered posture (āsana) and breath control, withdrawn consciousness (pratyāhāra) from the six senses, and overcome the taints of rajas, sattva, and tamas by his absorption in Hari.

55. He has merged the mind into intelligence, merged that into the

jīva (kṣetra-jña105), and then merged that into Brahman, the substratum [of everything], just like the air in a pot merges into the

totality of air.

56. He has destroyed all the e ects of the guṇas of māyā, restrained his mind and senses, abstained from all food, and is sitting

motionless like a pillar. Do not try to hold him back—he has

renounced all activities.

57. In fact, on the fth day from today, O king, he will abandon his

body, and burn it into ash.

58. While the body of her husband is burning along with the

thatched hermitage, his chaste wife, standing outside, will enter into

that re.

59. After hearing about this amazing thing, O joy of the Kuru dynasty, Vidura, feeling both joy and sorrow, will depart on a pilgrimage of holy places.'

60. Then, having said all this, Nārada, along with his tumburu stringed instrument, ascended to the celestial realms. Taking his words to heart, Yudhiṣṭhira gave up his sorrow."

The Tale of King Parīkṣit: Cursed to Die in Seven Days

Yoga Blueprint

The yogic message imparted by this tale is that, like Parīkṣit, all embodied beings face death. Parīkṣit's question, then, pertaining to the ultimate duty, purpose, and goal of human existence, what it is that one should do in the world at every moment—in essence, what one should do with one's mind—sets the stage for the entire text to impart its teachings.

Of additional interest is the text's illustration of the state of samādhi by Śamīka. In nirbīja samādhi (Yoga Sūtras I.47 .), consciousness is

exclusively immersed in its own nature and has no awareness of any external stimulation.

Book 1, Chapter 18

24. Once, after taking up his bow, King Parīkṣit set out to the forest

to hunt. While he was pursuing a deer, he became extremely tired,

hungry, and thirsty.

25. Not nding any body of water, he entered into Śamīka's

[renowned] hermitage, and saw the sage sitting peacefully, his eyes

closed.

26. Śamīka had attained the state beyond the three states of

consciousness—waking, dream, and deep sleep[106]—and so was completely inactive, his senses, prāṇa life airs, mind, and intelligence restrained.

27. His dreadlocks were disheveled, and he was draped in a

deerskin. The king, whose throat was dry, requested water from the

sage, who was in that state.

28. Upon not receiving a straw seat, and not being o ered sweet words or a hospitable beverage, or indeed anything at all, the king,

feeling that he had been disrespected, became angry.

29. O brāhmaṇa (Śaunaka), the king's anger and resentment suddenly erupted against the brāhmaṇa. This had never happened before to the king, but he had become compromised by hunger and

thirst.

30. So, as he was leaving, the king placed a dead snake with the tip

of his bow on the shoulder of the brāhmaṇa sage out of anger, and returned to his city.

31. [The king wondered:] "Were his eyes closed because he had

closed down his senses? Or was it rather really a feigned state of samādhi because of [not wishing to interact with me], a lowly member of the kṣatriya warrior caste?"

32. While this had been taking place, the brāhmaṇa's son had been out playing with other young children. Although he was but a boy,

he was very powerful. When he heard that his beloved father had

been subject to an o ense by the king, he uttered these words then

and there:

33. "Just see the irreligiousness of the rulers, who are like crows who have grown fat from eating the oblations meant for sacri ce!

This is an o ense against their masters by servants who are

doorkeepers, like dogs.

34. A lowly kṣatriya is clearly ordained to be the doorkeeper of the brāhmaṇa caste. How does one, who is supposed to stand at the door of the house, deserve to eat from the same dish [as the master]?

35. Since Lord Kṛṣṇa, the punisher of the miscreants, has left the world, I myself will today punish the transgressors of the law. Just

witness my power!"

36. After uttering this to his companions, the sage's son, his eyes red

with anger, touched the water of the Kauśikī river, and released a verbal thunderbolt in the form of a curse.

37. "Unleashed by me, the snake-bird Takṣaka will bite that

destroyer of his family's reputation. He has transgressed the limits of

the law and insulted my beloved father," he said.

38. Having done this, the boy returned to the āśrama hermitage and saw his father with the corpse of the snake on his shoulder.

Overwhelmed with pain, he cried out aloud.

39. The father, a descendant of sage Aṅgirā, heard the cry of his son. Slowly opening his eyes, he saw the dead snake on his

shoulder, O brāhmaṇa.

40. He threw aside the snake, and then inquired: "My son, why do

you wail? Who has wronged you?" Addressed in this way, the son

informed him about what had happened.

41. When he heard the account, the father did not approve of his

son's curse upon the king, who had not deserved such a thing: "Aho!

Aho! You have done a grave thing today; you have in icted an enormous punishment for a minor o ense.

42. You should never equate the king with ordinary men, you

foolish boy. He is declared [in the sacred texts] to be preeminent.

Through his formidable power, the citizens are protected without fearing anything and live in well-being.

43. The king, lord of men [is equal to] Lord Viṣṇu, the wielder of the discus. If he does not oversee [the kingdom], O son, then, in an instant, the world, unprotected and lled with thieves, becomes destroyed, like a herd of sheep.

44. People, many of whom are thieves, will curse, kill, and rob cattle, women, and wealth from each other. [Because of your deed], we will today incur the sin committed by the plunderers of wealth in those places where the king has been destroyed, even though that sin was not directly performed by us.

45. Without a king, the righteous codes of the Āryas—the injunctions of the four varṇas, castes, and āśramas (stages of life), outlined in the three Vedas—will vanish from society. As a consequence, when people become absorbed in lust and pro t, the mixing of the castes will ensue.107 People will then behave like monkeys and dogs [that is, with few regulations].

46. The king is the protector of dharma. He is the Lord of men, a sovereign of wide renown. He is the performer of horse sacri ces, 108 a sage-king, and a great devotee in person. The poor man was beset by hunger, thirst, and fatigue; he did not deserve to be cursed by us in that manner.

47. Bhagavān, the soul of all, should please forgive the sin performed by this young immature boy against His sinless servant,

the king.

48. The Lord's devotees, even though certainly capable of doing so,

do not retaliate when abused, insulted, cursed, dishonored, or even

when struck."

49. In this way, even though he had been disrespected by the king, the great sage did not consider this to be an o ense, but rather was

distressed by the o ense made by his son.

50. Generally, saintly persons, when made to encounter the dualities

of the world, 109 are neither disturbed nor elated by [the actions of]

others.110 This is because [they have realized] the ātman, situated beyond the guṇas.

Book 1, Chapter 19

1. Sūta continued:

“Meanwhile, the great king, thinking about the o ense that he had

done, was extremely troubled in mind: ‘ Aho! I performed a despicable deed, as if I were a non-Āryan, against an innocent brāhmaṇa, whose yogic power is retained concealed.

2. Therefore it is certain that a terrible calamity will very soon befall me because of the o ense I performed against this divine being. Let this freely occur to absolve me of sin so that I never commit such acts again.

3. Since I am so wretched, let the re of the brāhmaṇa’s rage even today consume my kingdom, strength, wealth, and treasury such

that I never again harbor a sinful attitude toward the twice-born brāhmaṇas, gods, or cows.’

4. As he was thinking in this manner, the king heard about his impending doom looming in the form of [the snake-bird] Takṣaka,

invoked by the son of the sage. He considered this to be tting: he

was attached [to worldly life] and the re of Takṣaka would soon be

the means of his detachment.

5. Parīkṣit gave up [any desire for] this world and the celestial one

—he had anyway long determined that they should be renounced,

considering service to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa to be superior. He then

sat down to fast to death on the bank of the Gaṅgā river.

6. What person, who is about to die, would not worship the Gaṅgā?

She brings water made divine from the dust of the feet of Kṛṣṇa111

mixed with the beautiful tulasī plant. 112 She puri es both worlds (earthly and celestial), along with their celestial lords.

7. Having made this resolve to sit on the banks of the Gaṅgā to fast until death, Parīkṣit, the descendant of the Pāṇḍavas, rm in the vows of a sage, and free from all attachments, concentrated on the

feet of Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa] with undivided attention.

8. At this, the great, realized sages, who can purify the worlds, arrived there along with their disciples. The saints, under the pretext of performing pilgrimage, actually themselves purify a

pilgrimage place. 113

9. They were: Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Cyavana, Śaradvān, Ariṣṭanemi, Bhṛgu,

Aṅgirā, Parāśara, the son of Gādhi (Viśvāmitra), Rāma, Utathya,

Indrapramada, Idhmavāha.

10. Medhātithi, Devala, Ārṣṭiṣeṇa, Bhāradvāja, Gautama, Pippalāda,

Maitreya, Aurva, Kavaṣa, Kumbhayoni, Dvaipāyana, and the great

Nārada.

11. And other great sages and eminent brāhmaṇas arrived also, as well as prominent kings like Aruṇa, etc. The king honored the

eminent sages from various lineages that had gathered there, and paid obeisance by bowing his head [to their feet].

12. When they were seated comfortably and he had once again

o ered homage to them, the king stood before them with hands

folded in supplication, his mind completely detached from worldly

a airs, and informed them of his intentions.

13. The king said:

‘ Aho! The dynasty of kings is actually contemptible, and deserves to be discarded far from the place where the water used for washing

the feet of the brāhmaṇas is found. 114 But nonetheless, because of this, we kings are actually the most fortunate among men, since this

character of ours makes us eligible for the compassion of

magnanimous souls.

14. I am a sinful member of such a dynasty, and my mind is always

attached to household a airs. The Supreme Lord of all has

manifested in the form of a brāhmaṇa’s curse, and in this manner has thereby become the trigger for my detachment from worldly

a airs. Because of such a curse, people who are attached to worldly

a airs would normally be immediately thrown into a state of fear.

15. May the sages and Mother Gaṅgā accept me as someone who has

turned to the Lord, and whose mind is xed on Him. Let Takṣaka, or

whatever magical thing was discharged by the brāhmaṇa, bite me as is tting. And may you all please sing the glories of Viṣṇu.

16. May fellowship with those who have taken shelter of the

unlimited Lord, as well as a ection for them, be bestowed upon me

in whatever be the next birth I may obtain in this material world,

and may I be a friend to all. I o er homage to the brāhmaṇas.’

17. The king, who had handed over his responsibilities to his son,

was determined and resolved in mind. On the southern side of the

Gaṅgā facing north, he sat down on kuśa grass with its roots facing east. [115]

18. When the king of kings was seated on that seat and awaiting death in this manner, the hosts of celestial beings in the heavens joyfully praised him, showered owers on the earth, and played

kettledrums continuously.

19. The great sages who had assembled there also praised him with

joyful hearts: 'Well done!' Their nature is to bestow blessings on living beings, and so they spoke to him about the pleasing qualities

of Lord Viṣṇu, whose glories are supreme:

20. 'O best of sage-kings, from among those who are devoted to Kṛṣṇa, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the ones who

desire to become personal associates of Bhagavān renounce the royal throne, which is honored by the helmets of other kings. [116]

21. So now we will all remain here until this foremost of Bhagavān's devotees relinquishes his material body and departs to the supreme

realm, Vaikuṇṭha, which is free from sorrow and hankering.'[117]

22. Those assembled sages were xed in yoga, and their words were impartial, full of sweetness, profound, and true. After listening to them, Parīkṣit, desiring to hear about the deeds of Viṣṇu, o ered the

sages his respects and addressed them:

23. 'You have all assembled here from all the corners of the world—

just as the Vedas which are beyond the three worlds manifest divine bodily forms. 118 One whose nature is to bestow grace on others has no other purpose whatsoever, either in this world, or in the next, other than to do this.

24. Therefore, with full faith in you, O learned ones, I submit to you this most worthy query: From all those duties that are to be performed by everyone, which is the optimum duty that should be performed speci cally by those about to die? Please give this your full consideration.'

25. At that moment, by chance, the son of Vyāsa, the great Śuka, happened to arrive there. He was wandering around the earth in the guise of an ascetic renunciant, completely unattached to anything, as he was satis ed by the realization of his ātman, the inner self. Surrounded by young boys, his elevated characteristics lay concealed.

26. He was sixteen years of age, with handsome and youthful feet, hands, thighs, arms, shoulders, cheeks, and body. His face had beautiful wide eyes, a stately nose, symmetrical ears, and attractive eyebrows. His ne neck was like a conch shell.

27. His collarbones were concealed, and he had a broad, attractive chest. His navel was like a whirlpool, and his stomach had beautiful

lines. He was naked, and his hair was scattered about his face. His arms were long, and he was as attractive as the best of the celestials.

28. He was dark complexioned and displayed an attractive, youthful

appearance. He was captivating to women because of his charming

smile. All those sages could recognize his [saintly] characteristics even though his luster was covered over, and so they rose up from

their seats.

29. Thereupon, Parīkṣit, beloved of Viṣṇu, o ered respect by bowing

his head to Śuka, who had arrived as an unexpected guest. At this,

all the simple folk, women and children [who were following him],

departed. Honored in this way, Śuka sat on an elevated seat.

30. Surrounded by brāhmaṇa sages, kingly sages, and celestial sages, the divine Śuka, a great soul among great souls, shone forth in that

place like the moon surrounded by the multitude of planets,

constellations and stars.

31. Śuka was acutely intelligent. The king, devotee of Viṣṇu,

approached the sage, who was sitting peacefully. Parīkṣit bowed his

head to him, and attentively o ered him respects with joined hands.

Then he inquired from him with joyful words.

32. Parīkṣit said:

‘ Aho! By your lordship arriving here unexpectedly out of kindness, we, who are mere kṣatriyas, members of the warrior caste, have today become worthy of being served by saints, O brāhmana; we have been transformed into pilgrimage places by your presence.

33. By simply remembering such persons [as yourself], our houses

become puri ed. What then to speak about seeing and touching

you, washing your feet, and o ering you a seat, and so forth?

34. From being in your presence, O great yogī, even the greatest of sins are immediately destroyed, just like the enemies of the

celestials are destroyed in the presence of Viṣṇu.

35. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, who is dear to the sons of Pāṇḍu, is surely pleased with me: so as to please his paternal aunt’s sons, the

Pāṇḍavas, [119] he has accepted the descendants of their lineage.

36. Otherwise, how is it possible for me to be blessed by seeing you?

You are perfect and compassionate, but your ways are concealed to

humankind—especially to those who are about to die.

37. Therefore I ask of you, the most eminent of gurus among yogīs: What is the means to perfection? What should be done at every moment by a person in this world about to die?

38. What should be heard? What mantra should be chanted (japyam[120)?] What actions should be performed by men, O master?

What should be remembered? And what should be worshipped? And

also please tell me what should be avoided.

39. Indeed, O brāhmaṇa, it is known that your honor never lingers in the homes of those attached to their households for more than even the brief time taken to milk a cow.’” [121]

40. Sūta said:

“Addressed and questioned in this way with those sincere words, the

great Śuka, son of Bādarāyaṇa (Vyāsa) and knower of dharma, responded to the king.”

[Continued in the next tale.]

Book II

The Teachings of Sage Śuka: The Wandering Enlightened Sage

Yoga Blueprint *We notice in verses I.7 and I.9 that sages who are already enlightened, and consequently have completely lost attraction for all things related to the guṇas from having attained realization of the ātman , nonetheless are attracted to the narratives of Kṛṣṇa. Here again we nd one of the main subthemes of the Bhāgavata . The text thus indicates that Kṛṣṇa’s nature and qualities are not only transcendent to prakṛti , but higher than the individual ātman .*

His form and characteristics are the highest and most blissful expression of Brahman , and a vision of Him is the ultimate spiritual experience. In this regard, we see here, as elsewhere, the repetition of a fairly detailed description of the form of Viṣṇu. This recurs frequently throughout the Bhāgavata in order to fully ingrain the details of this form in the practitioner’s mind, such that it can be recalled during meditation along the lines indicted in 2.9–14.

Other noteworthy points are the equivalence of sacred texts with Brahman in I.8 (the sixteenth-century theologian Vallabha considered the Bhāgavata a type of literary avatāra). This section also includes a technical and esoteric passage on the subtle physiology that is of particular interest to the Śākta traditions (II.19–32). The somewhat technical practice outlined here involves an involution of the Sāṅkhya categories of the body from their grossest to progressively subtler forms until one arrives at the ātman .

However, the ultimate goal of all and any practice is to remember Nārāyaṇa at the end of life (II.1.6).

Book II, Chapter 1

1. Śrī Śuka said: "This question of yours, posed for the welfare of people, is excellent, O king. It is appreciated by those who know the

ātman, and, from everything that is useful for people to hear, it is the most worthwhile topic.

2. For those people who have not seen the truth of the ātman and are attached to their homes and households, there are thousands of

things that seem worth hearing, O king.

3. The prime of life is carried away by sexual intercourse and sleep

during the night, O king, and, through striving for wealth and maintaining one's family during the day.

4. Obsessed with one's body, children, and wife, etc., which are like

illusory soldiers [subject to death at any moment], one does not perceive their demise, even while actually perceiving it.

5. Therefore, O son of Bhārata, one desiring freedom from fear should hear about, glorify, and remember Hari. He is Bhagavān, Īśvara, the soul of everything.

6. Indeed, the perfection of life for a person, whether through the

paths of Sāṅkhya or Yoga, through performance of duty, or through

knowledge, is to remember Nārāyaṇa at the end of life.

7. Usually, O king, sages who have desisted from [mundane

ritualistic] rules and regulations, and are situated in the state beyond the guṇas—i.e., have attained Brahman—relish the qualities and stories of Hari.

8. This Bhāgavata Purāṇa is nondi erent from Brahman. I learned it from my father, Vyāsa, at the end of the Dvāpara yuga, the third world age.

9. Although I had attained perfection and was situated in the state

beyond the guṇas, my mind was captured by the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa; hence I studied this history, O sagely king.

10. I will narrate that Purāṇa to you; you are a great soul, sir.

Devotion for Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa] is awakened in those who have faith

in it.

11. The chanting of the name of Hari has been prescribed for those

yogīs who are disinterested [in material enjoyment] and who desire

freedom from fear.

12. What is the use of many years squandered mindlessly by a

deluded person? Let it be known that it is better for one hour to be

spent striving for one's ultimate welfare.

13. After the sage-king by name of Khaṭvaṅga found out what

remained of his life in this world, he renounced everything in an instant, and dedicated himself to Hari, who bestows fearlessness. 1

14. There is a limit also, O Kaurava, to your life span: seven days.

Take all steps necessary to prepare for death during this time.

15. When the end comes, a person should sever desire for this body

and all that is associated with it [family, possessions, and the like]

with the weapon of detachment, free from fear.

16. With mind xed, one should leave home alone, wash in the

waters of a sacred place, and then sit on a seat prepared according

to the prescriptions.

17. One should concentrate on the three constituent phonemes of oṁ [a-u-m], the great and pure Brahman in the form of sound. One should restrain one's mind and control one's breathing, keeping

one's mind xed on that seed of Brahman [oṁ].

18. With the intelligence as the driver, 2 one should remove the senses from the sense objects by means of the mind. If one's mind

becomes disturbed by agitation, one should focus it on the desired

object, Lord Kṛṣṇa, by means of the intelligence.

19. Then, one should meditate on one limb of the Lord, with

uninterrupted mind. After controlling the mind and removing it

from sense objects, one should not think of anything else. The mind

should take pleasure there alone: the Supreme destination of Viṣṇu.

20. Normally, one's mind is harassed by rajas and deluded by tamas.

A wise person should control it by concentration (dhāraṇā) and destroy all the impurities created by it.

21. While this concentration on the refuge [of Lord Viṣṇu] is being

practiced, the symptoms of bhakti, devotion, appear in the yogī. This

yoga, which is most auspicious [that is, bhakti], quickly manifests."

Book II, Chapter 2

1. Śrī Śuka said: […]

2. "The path of the Vedic scriptures is such that one's intelligence

puzzles over the meaningless words. Wandering here and there in the world of māyā, illusion [in pursuance of the Vedic injunctions], one does not attain one's goals, 3 just like a sleeping person [does not attain his goals] through dreams, which are made of memory imprints.4

3. Therefore, a sage, who is not deluded, but whose intelligence is

xed [on the self], should accept whatever things are necessary for

accomplishing this purpose and no more; one should not struggle

[for anything more] than this, realizing that doing so would simply

be labor [for nothing].

4. When the ground is there, what is the use of endeavoring for beds? When two arms belong to oneself by nature, what is the use of

pillows? When there are two hands, what is the use of a variety of

implements for food? And when nakedness or the bark of trees5 is available, what is the use of clothes?

5. Are there no torn clothes discarded on the road? Do the trees, who maintain others, no longer give alms? Have the rivers dried up?

Are the caves closed? Does the almighty Hari not protect his

devotees? Why should wise people serve those who are blinded by

the pride of wealth?

6. It is the ātman that is the cherished goal. It is [a part of] the unlimited Bhagavān. It is self-manifest and perfect and lies within one's heart. This ātman is the goal that one should x in mind and worship contentedly. It is in this way that the cause of saṁsāra is brought to an end.

7. Upon seeing people fallen into the Vaitaraṇī river [on the way to

hell]6 and experiencing the su ering generated by their karma, who

other than a beast would neglect contemplating on the Supreme and instead engage in immoral behavior?

8. Some people contemplate with concentration on the Supreme

Being as situated in the inner space of the heart within their own

bodies. The size of the span of a hand, 7 He has four arms bearing lotus, disc, conch, and club.

9. He has a smiling face and eyes large as lotuses. His cloth is yellowish like the lament of a kadamba ower. He has ornaments

brilliant with precious jewels and gold, and earrings and a

headpiece glittering with great gems.

10. His tender budlike feet are placed by the masters of yogīs into the receptacle of their hearts, which are like the pericarp of full-blown lotuses. He is marked with the sign of Śrī, the Goddess of Prosperity [the śrīvatsa, a curl of hair on His chest]. He wears the kaustubha jewel around His neck, and is covered by a garland of forest owers of unfading beauty.

11. He is adorned with a belt, and with very valuable rings, anklets,

and bracelets. His beautiful smiling face is delightful with lustrous,

clean, curly, bluish locks.

12. His abundant grace is evident from the play of His eyebrows and

the brightness of His happy, playful, smiling eyes. The yogī should gaze at this mental image of Īśvara, which is pieced together by the mind, for as long as the mind can remain xed in concentration.

13. With one's mind one should focus on each limb consecutively,

from the feet up to the smiling face of Kṛṣṇa, the bearer of the club.

As one's intelligence becomes progressively puri ed, one should

move on from the previous lower part [of the Lord's anatomy] and

x one's mind on the next higher part.

14. Until bhakti yoga is awakened by this form of the universal Īśvara, the Supreme Seer, then one should instead contemplate the grosser form of the Supreme Person after the completion of one's daily religious practices. 8

15. When the ascetic becomes desirous of abandoning this world, dear king, he should establish himself on a comfortable stable seat

(sthira- sukham āsanam),9 and, with his breath mastered, control his prāṇa. His mind should not become attached to time and place.10

16. After controlling the mind by means of his pure intelligence, the

yogī should merge it into the subtle body (kṣetra-jña),11 and the latter into the ātman. The wise person should then absorb the ātman into the Supreme ātman. Upon attaining complete peace, one should desist from all activity.

17. In that state there is no Time, which is the controller of even the

celestials, what to speak of the in uence of the higher gods who are

controllers over the universe. Neither sattva, nor rajas, nor tamas exists there, nor does ego, intellect, or primordial matter.

18. The yogīs long for the supreme abode of Viṣṇu. Desiring to abandon all that is illusory by the process of elimination (neti neti12),

they give up misidenti cation with the body, and embrace His

adorable feet in their hearts with exclusive devotion at every

moment.

19. The sage who is situated [in Brahman], who is vigorous, whose mind is controlled, and who has gained wisdom from the sacred

texts, should leave his body in the following manner: he should block the anus with his heel, and then energetically raise the life air

(prāṇa) up through the six locations [the cakras].13

20. He should raise the air situated in the navel [maṇipūraka cakra]

to the heart [anāhata cakra]; from there, by means of the motion of the upward-moving (udāna) life air, the sage should lead it to the breast [viśuddhi cakra], and from there the concentrating sage should aim with his intelligence for the root of the palate and slowly lead the life air upward to that place.

21. From there, he should raise it up to between the eyebrows, indi erent [to all desires] and with all the seven outlets of the body

[eyes, nostrils, ears and mouth] closed o . After holding the life air

there without e ort with his gaze xed, he should eject it through the crown of the head [sahasrāra cakra], abandon his body, and attain the supreme.

22. But if, O king, he should wish to reach the abode of Brahmā; or,

indeed, the pleasure grounds of the celestial beings who can travel

through the air; or achieve the eight mystic powers over anything

made of the guṇas, then he should retain his mind and senses [in the subtle body] so as to achieve these.

23. They say that the masters of yoga, who practice the cultivation of knowledge, austerities, yoga, samādhi, and devotion, and who have [subtle] bodies that [can travel] through the air, can attain destinations anywhere within or beyond the three worlds. Such destinations are not available for those who engage in karma,

mundane ritualistic activities.14

24. Once he has passed through the pure suṣumṇā pathway15 leading to Brahmā's realm, he reaches the abode of Agni, the god of re.

Thereafter, when all his impurities have been cleansed, he proceeds

higher, O king, to the śaiśumāra, the whorl in the heavens resembling an alligator, presided over by Lord Viṣṇu.

25. Then, alone, in the pure subtle body, manifesting the aṇimā

mystic power of becoming smaller than the smallest, the yogī

proceeds beyond the navel of the universe of Lord Viṣṇu. 16 He thereafter attains the realms adored by the knowers of Brahman, where the celestials who live for a kalpa aeon17 enjoy themselves.

26. Then, after witnessing the entire universe being consumed by the re issuing forth from the mouth of Ananta (Śeṣa18), he emerges at Brahmā's highest abode of Satya-loka, which endures for

Brahmā's entire life, a period of two parārdhas.19 This is the realm enjoyed by the masters of the perfected beings.

27. In that realm there is no sorrow, no old age, no disease, no death, and no a ictions. Nor are there any concerns—except

sometimes the mind feels compassion from witnessing the terrible su erings and births and deaths of those who do not know all this.

28. Then, with his mind, the yogī fearlessly returns [his body] to the elements: earth to water, and then, without haste, after manifesting

an e ulgent form, to re. After merging this into air, in turn, by his

mind, he eventually also dissolves this into ether, the great subtle

covering of the ātman.

29. The yogī attains the quality [tanmātra] of smell by means of the nose; taste, by means of the tongue; sight, by means of the eye; touch, by means of the skin; and sound, the special quality of the

sky, by means of the ear. He accomplishes this goal by manipulating

the prāṇa life air.

30. Then he attains the ahaṅkāra (ego) where the senses, sense objects, mind, and their presiding deities are merged. Then, along with the ahaṅkāra, the yogī attains buddhi (mahat, intelligence), and then prakṛti, where the guṇas are quiescent. 20

31. Along with prakṛti his ātman nally attains the supreme soul

[Viṣṇu], who is peaceful and blissful. Attaining his blissful nature in

that nal goal, the yogī enters the divine state, and is never again interested in this world, my dear king.

32. These two paths about which you inquired, O king, are eternal,

and are described in the Vedas. 21 Actually, Bhagavān Vāsudeva had previously spoken about them, after He had become satis ed from

being worshipped by Brahmā.

33. There is no path more auspicious than this, for one who is immersed in saṁsāra, because by following it bhakti yoga for Bhagavān Vāsudeva is developed.

34. After applying his intelligence to studying the entire three Vedas, Lord Brahmā, the highest being, determined the means

whereby love for the Supreme is attained.

35. Bhagavān Hari is perceived in all living beings by means of His presence as the ātman. There [must exist] a seer on account of the

existence of [instruments of sight] such as the intelligence, etc., as well as the existence of objects of sight; it is by these characteristics that the existence of the ātman (the seer) can be inferred.22

36. Therefore, O king, it is Bhagavān, Hari, who should be heard, recited, and remembered about by people with all their hearts, in all

places and all times.

37. Bhagavān is the soul of the saintly persons. Those who drink the nectar of stories about Him attained through the vessels of the ears,

purify the heart from the contamination of sense objects and attain

His lotus feet as their destination."

Book II, Chapter 3

1. Śrī Śuka said: "In this way, the question your highness posed to me has been answered on behalf of all wise people in human society

who are about to die.

[…]

10. Irrespective of whether one is free of desire, full of all desires, or desirous of liberation, mokṣa, one should intensely worship the Supreme Person through the practice of bhakti yoga, if one is intelligent.

11. The attainment of the highest good, even for those who worship

the celestial beings, 23 is this: un inching devotion to Bhagavān, attained from association with the devotees of Bhagavān.

12. Knowledge causes the whirlpool of the waves of the guṇas to abate. From that comes satisfaction in the self and disinterest in the

guṇas. Thereafter comes bhakti yoga, which is the best path to liberation. Who, contented by the narrations of Hari, would not develop attraction for these narrations?"

13. Sage Śaunaka said: "After hearing all these teachings that had

been imparted to him, what else did the foremost king of the

Bharatas further inquire from the seer sage Śuka, son of Vyāsa?

14. You should kindly relate these to us, O learned Sūta, we are eager to hear. Discussions which culminate in narratives about Hari

are surely most tting in an assembly of saintly people.

15. That very Pāṇḍava king Parīkṣit, the great charioteer, [in his childhood] imitated the pastimes of Hari while he was still playing

with toys.

16. Śuka, that great son of Vyāsa, was devoted exclusively to

Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa]. It is certain that the enlivening qualities of Viṣṇu,

whose glories are broadcast widely, would have been expressed in

that gathering of saints.

17. The rising and setting of the sun in the heavens takes away the

life of all men here on earth, except for that person whose every moment is spent in talking about the glorious Viṣṇu.

18. Do not the trees also live? Do not bellows breathe? Do not the other animals in the village eat and mate?

19. That person whose ears have never heard the name of Kṛṣṇa, the elder brother of Balarāma, is considered to be a beast, like the donkeys, camels, pigs, and dogs.

20. The cavities in the ears of a person who does not listen to the deeds of the glorious Viṣṇu (Urukrama), are just like empty holes, and the tongue that does not recite the verses about Viṣṇu (Urugāya) is useless, like that of a frog's.

21. The head, even though adorned with a crown or turban, is simply a large burden, if it does not o er obeisance to Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa]. And the hands, even though bedecked with shining golden bracelets, are like those of a corpse if they do not o er worship to Hari.

22. The eyes of men that do not gaze on the forms of Viṣṇu are like the eyes of a peacock's plumage, and the feet that do not travel to the pilgrimage places of Hari are like [the roots] of the tree species.

23. A person who does not obtain the dust from the feet of Bhagavān is like a corpse, even though living, and a human being who has not experienced the smell of the tulasī plant from the feet of Viṣṇu is likewise a corpse even though capable of smelling.

24. That heart is made of stone, which, when hearing the name of

Hari, does not produce bodily transformations such as tears in the

eyes and the hair standing erect on the body.

25. Speak to us, dear Sūta, it is pleasing to the mind. Śuka, son of

Vyāsa, is expert in the knowledge of the ātman and foremost of devotees. Tell us what he related to the king, when being questioned

by him in such an exemplary fashion."

Book II, Chapter 4

1. Sūta said: "After hearing the words of Śuka, which contained clear truths about ultimate reality, Parīkṣit, son of Uttarā, xed his

undivided intelligence on Kṛṣṇa.

2. He abandoned the insidious attachment to his kingdom, which

was being well managed, and to his friends, wealth, livestock,

residence, wife, and his own body.

3. That high-minded one had faith in hearing about the activities of

Kṛṣṇa, and asked this very same question that you have asked, O

great saints.

4. After coming to know of his impending death, Parīkṣit renounced

the threefold pursuits (dharma, duty; artha, prosperity; and kāma, enjoyment), and entered into a state of devotional absorption in Bhagavān Vāsudeva."

5. The king said:

“You are an omniscient being, and your words are true, O brāhmaṇa.

My ignorance is being dispelled as you narrate the stories of Hari.

6. I wish to know once again about how Bhagavān creates this universe by His personal māyā, which is so di cult to comprehend, even by the great lords of the celestials.

7. How does He maintain it and then again destroy it? How does that Supreme omnipresent Being, who possesses all power, harness

His power, and then playfully engage in creation Himself, as well as

enhance His creation through the play of others [such as Brahmā]?

8. There is no doubt, O brāhmaṇa, that the wondrous deeds of Bhagavān Hari appear di cult to comprehend, even by the sage poets. His feats are amazing, 9. How does He uphold the guṇas of prakṛti, both simultaneously and sequentially? Although He is One, He engages in activity through manifold incarnations.

10. Since your holiness is well-versed in the Vedic literature and in

the Absolute Truth, please address this confusion that I have.”

[Here follows one of the Bhāgavata ’s several sections on creation.]

The Tale and Teachings of Lord Brahmā: The Primordial Yogī

Yoga Blueprint *Brahmā is the creator of the universe, but a secondary creator, more like an engineer: he does not create the primordial matrix of prakṛti , which as we know is a śakti power of Kṛṣṇa, but is designated to create the forms of the universe from this preexisting stu . He too is a mortal being with a nite life span. Known also as Hiraṇyagarbha, Brahmā is of interest for a number of reasons, one of which is that he is considered the*

primeval founder of yoga according to tradition, 24 the primordial yogī. In this, he is associated with rst imparting the practices in the original teachings known as the Hiraṇyagarbha Treatise (which is no longer extant but referred to in various texts).

The narrative here makes several important points. One important yogic message is that even Brahmā, the most intelligent being in the universe, is utterly incapable of perceiving or even understanding Viṣṇu.

The limitations of even the most powerful intellect in understanding God is thereby delineated. It is only after he has performed the requisite austerities that Viṣṇu reveals Himself as well as Vaikuṇṭha, the Kingdom of God. The subtext here as everywhere else in the text, is that such a vision can never be attained by one's own intellectual or even yogic prowess, but only by devotion (see also Gītā 11.54). However, while devotion is paramount and autonomous, Brahmā nonetheless had to perform intense austerities in order to gain this vision. Tapas , austerity, the rst element in Patañjali's kriyā yoga (II.1), is by no means jettisoned in bhakti.

This tale patches together two di erent narratives pertaining to Brahmā's vision from two di erent books of the Bhāgavata .

Book II, Chapter 5

1. Nārada said: "Homage to you, Brahmā, lord of the celestials! You

are the rstborn being, and the progenitor of all other beings.

Kindly explain to me the knowledge through which the ātman is revealed.

2. Please disclose the truth about this material reality. What is its

form? What is its support? From what is it created, O master? On

what is it resting? And what is beyond it?

3. After all, your Lordship knows everything, past, present, and future. You know this universe through direct realization, as if it were an āmalaka fruit in the palm of your hand, O master.

4. Through your own māyā power, you alone create the embodied living beings by means of the physical elements. But what is beyond you? What is your support? What is your true nature? And what is the source of your perception?

5. Like a spider, you create those beings without fatigue, but you yourself are not created by anyone else; you rest on your own potency.

6. I do not know from where else anything that has form and is nameable[25] can be created, O master, whether it is an entity that is high or low, gross or subtle, or in between.

7. But yet you undertook that severe austerity (tapas) with extremely concentrated mind. Because of that you confuse us: you raise a great doubt in our minds as to whether you are in fact the [Supreme Being.26]

8. O omniscient lord of everything! Kindly explain everything that I have asked about so that I may understand by your instruction."

9. Brahmā said: "This inquiry of yours could not be better, O son! You are blessing me since I am now inspired to explain the glories of Bhagavān, O gentle one!

10. What you have said is correct, my child. Since your knowledge about me is limited, you do not know He who is greater than I.

11. I do illuminate the universe, but it has already been illuminated by His e ulgence, just as the sun, re, the moon, the constellations,

the planets, and the stars are illuminated by Him.

12. Reverence to Bhagavān Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa]. It is because of His insurmountable māyā illusion that people call me the guru of the world; but the fact is that I myself meditate on Him.

13. People with less intelligence, who are bewildered by that māyā, think in terms of 'I' and 'my.'27 But māyā herself is ashamed of presenting herself before Him.

14. There is no other thing in reality apart from Vāsudeva, O

brāhmaṇa,28 whether in the form of substance, activity, Time, nature, or soul. 29

15. The celestials are born from Nārāyaṇa's body. The Vedas accept

Nārāyaṇa as the supreme, the various worlds accept Nārāyaṇa as

supreme, ritual sacri ces are o ered to Nārāyaṇa as supreme.

16. Yoga is dedicated to Nārāyaṇa as supreme, tapas is devoted to Nārāyaṇa as supreme, knowledge accepts Nārāyaṇa as supreme, and

the nal destination of life is Nārāyaṇa as supreme.

17. I myself am created by Him, and then, directed by His glance,

create the creation. He is the Seer, the Lord, the highest Truth, and

the ātman of all.

18. Although He is transcendent to the guṇas, by His māyā potency, He has adopted the forms of the three guṇas— sattva, rajas, and tamas—for the purpose of maintenance, creation, and destruction, O

great one.

19. The guṇas, which are the basis of material substances, knowledge, and action, continually bind the puruṣa in cause, e ect,

and agency. 30 Although he is free, the puruṣa is subject to illusion.

20. He, Bhagavān Adhokṣaja [Lord Viṣṇu], is imperceptible because of these three guṇas. But he is my Īśvara as well as the Īśvara of all others, O brahmaṇa."

[An account of creation follows, involving the Sāṅkhya metaphysical categories.]

Book II, Chapter 6

[A discussion of the Virāṭ Puruṣa opens this chapter. This involves a meditational form of Viṣṇu associating the limbs of God with various natural phenomenon such as the sun and moon.]

30. This universe is situated in Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa. Although He is beyond the guṇas (qualities) of prakṛti, He utilizes His own māyā for the creation, maintenance, and destruction of the universe. His

qualities are wondrous.

31. It is under His appointment that I create the world, and it is under His control that Hara, Śiva, destroys it. He, the controller of

the three guṇas, maintains it in the form of the great Puruṣa, Viṣṇu.

32. Thus I have explained to you, O son, about that which you inquired. There is no existent, moving or non-moving, other than Bhagavān.

33. Because I keep Hari xed in my heart with great intensity, my

words have never proved to be false, my dear Nārada, nor has any

falsity ever entered my mind, nor have my senses ever fallen into

unrighteous ways.

34. Although I am the keeper of sacred lore, and the embodiment of

austerity (tapas), and although I am honored as the Lord of the progenitors (prajāpatis), and although I am immersed in the practice of yoga and have fully mastered that practice, yet I do not understand He from whom I myself am generated.

35. I o er homage to His feet—they are all auspicious, destroy saṁsāra, and bring all blessings to those who seek them. Even He

cannot fathom the omnipotency of His own māyā— just like the sky cannot understand its own limit—so how can anyone else

understand Him?!

36. Neither I, nor you, nor Śiva understands His real nature, what to

speak of other celestials knowing it. Those of us whose intelligence

is bewildered by His māyā perceive the composition of this world in accordance with our own perspectives.

37. We all glorify the deeds of His avatāras, but we do not understand Him in truth. Obeisance to Him, Bhagavān.

38. He is the original unborn Puruṣa. Every age (kalpa) he creates, maintains, and destroys Himself within Himself through Himself. 31

39. He is pure autonomous knowledge, pervading everything

completely. He is the complete Truth, nondual, transcendent to the

guṇas, eternal, without beginning or end.

40. O sage! Whereas the wise, whose minds, senses, and body are

controlled, realize Him, He becomes distorted by perverse

argumentation, and disappears.

41. The rst avatāra of the Supreme is the Puruṣa. He is Time, nature, the mind, cause and e ect, material substance, the evolutes

of prakṛti, the qualities of things, the senses, the Cosmic Being (Virāṭ 32), self-luminous, and the aggregate of all moving and non-moving entities.

42.–44. I myself; Śiva; Viṣṇu; Dakṣa, and all the progenitors of created beings; others such as yourself; the rulers of the celestial realms; the rulers of the realms of accomplished siddhas who travel through the ether; 33 the rulers of the realm of mortals; as well as those of the lower realms; the lords of the celestial gandharvas, vidyādharas, and cāraṇas;34 the lords of the yakṣas, rākṣasas, serpents, and nāga divine snakes;35 the best among the ṛṣi sages and forefathers; the chiefs among the daityas, dānavas, and siddhas; and others who are the foremost among the deceased spirits (pretas), evil beings (piśācas), ghosts, kūṣmāṇḍas, large aquatics, deer, and birds; in short, whatever in this world possesses supernormal qualities (bhaga), 36 greatness, potency, fortitude, strength, compassion, beauty, modesty, power, intelligence, amazing color, with form or shapeless, is nothing other than that Ultimate Truth.

45. O sage! The scriptures describe the principal līlā-avatāras of the Puruṣa, who is the ground of all beings. I will narrate them to you.

Relish them—they are wonderful, and evaporate all the impurities

of the ears.

[A narration of the principal incarnations ensues.]

Brahmā's Vision of God

Book II, Chapter 9

1. Śrī Śuka said: "O king! No actual connection can exist between the objects of the world and the conscious transcendent soul. It is

only because of māyā (illusion) cast over the soul that this appears to occur. This is just like one who sees objects in a dream; [there is

no actual connection between these objects and the dreamer].

2. The ātman appears to have many forms, by dint of māyā assuming many forms. Enjoying itself in the guṇas of māyā, it thinks: 'I am'

and 'This belongs to me.'

3. When, on the other hand, its illusion is dissipated, and the soul

revels in its own magni cence, which is transcendent to Time and

māyā, it is then able to renounce both Time and māyā and exist in its own autonomy.

4. Worshipped by Brahmā's sincere vows, Bhagavān revealed His form to him. He then imparted divine Truth to him so as to remove

all doubts about the reality of the ātman.

5. Brahmā, the rst of the celestial gods and the foremost teacher of

the world, sat on his seat and, with a desire to create, re ected [on

how he might do so]. But he could not gure out the necessary means for creating the manifest universe.

6. One day, as he was deliberating in this way, the great Lord Brahmā heard a voice from the water below, which twice uttered two syllables. They consisted of the sixteenth (ta) and twenty-rst (pa) letters of the Sanskrit alphabet: (i.e., tapas, austerity). This word is the wealth of the ascetics.

7. Upon hearing this, Brahmā looked all around, striving to see the

speaker. Upon not seeing anyone else there, he got up from his seat,

and decided that the voice had been for his bene t. So, taking this

as if it were an instruction to perform tapas, he concentrated his mind.

8. Brahmā's intuition was correct. With his breath and mind under

control, and with both sets of senses[37] restrained, he performed tapas for a thousand years. Brahmā, the greatest performer of tapas from all those who perform tapas, engaged in tapas, illuminating all the worlds .

9. Worshipped in this manner, Bhagavān revealed His personal abode to Brahmā. Extolled by men who have realized their own true

selves, Vaikuṇṭha is the supreme place. There is nothing higher that

exists. It is free of all su ering, illusion, and fear.

10. Rajas and tamas do not prevail there, nor sattva tinged by either of them. Time has no sway there, nor māyā— what then to speak of anything else! The attendants of Hari there are worshipped by both

gods and demons.

11. These attendants have brilliant dark hues and lotus-petal eyes.

They wear yellowish garments and have extremely attractive and

beautiful forms. They are e ulgent and decorated with the choicest

ornaments and medallions of brilliant awless gems. Their

complexions are of coral, gems, or lotus ber. They wear dazzling

necklaces, crowns, and garlands.

12. Just as the sky is illuminated by rows of clouds lled with lightning, so Vaikuṇṭha shone forth, lled with rows of brilliant

sparkling ying vehicles belonging to the great liberated souls accompanied by their lustrous female consorts.

13. There, the beautiful Goddess of Fortune, Śrī, o ers devotion at

the feet of Viṣṇu in various ways through Her potencies, as She reclines on a swing. She is singing of the deeds of Her beloved, as

She Herself is glori ed by the bees, the followers of Spring.

14. In Vaikuṇṭha, Brahmā saw Viṣṇu, Lord of the devotees, Lord of

Śrī, Lord of sacri cial rituals, and Lord of the Universe. Viṣṇu, God

Almighty, was being attended to by the most prominent of His

associates: Sunanda, Nanda, Prabala, Arhaṇa, and others.

15. Viṣṇu was favoring His servants with kindness, and His glances

were like intoxicating nectar. His face had reddish eyes, and bore a

charming smile. He had four arms, and wore a helmet and earrings.

He wore yellow garments, and bore the mark on His chest of Śrī, the

Goddess of Fortune.38

16. The Supreme Being was seated on an invaluable throne,

surrounded by His four, sixteen, and ve śakti powers. 39 He was endowed with His inherent opulences, 40 which are only found in temporary form elsewhere. He was none other than Īśvara Himself, enjoying His divine abode.

17. Brahmā, the (secondary) creator of the universe, was

overwhelmed inside with bliss at that sight. His body experienced ecstasy, and his eyes were brimming with tears of love. He o ered

obeisances to the lotus feet of Viṣṇu, in accordance with the practice

followed by the great paramahaṁsa saints. 41

18. The beloved Lord felt love toward His cherished Brahmā, who had approached Him expressing such loving feelings, and touched him with His hand, smiling gently. Brahmā was worthy of His personal direction in the creation of the species, and so Viṣṇu spoke with illuminating words to the great seer.

19. Śrī Bhagavān said: 'O Brahmā, source of the Vedas! I am hardly satis ed by the tapas of false yogīs, 42 but I am fully satis ed by your tapas, which you have performed for a long time with the desire to create.

20. Blessings upon you! Choose any desired boon from Me, the Lord of boons, O Brahmā! The perfection of human austerities culminates in a vision of Me.

21. After hearing that [voice], you performed tapas for a long time, so I wanted you to have a vision of My divine abode.

22. When you were bewildered as to how to perform your work, it was I who inspired you how to do so. Tapas is my heart, and I personally am the soul of tapas, O sinless one.

23. Tapas is very hard to perform! I create this universe by tapas, and then consume it again by tapas. I maintain the universe by tapas. My potency lies in tapas.'

24. Brahmā said: 'O Bhagavān! You are seated in the heart (cave)43 of all beings, and are the supervisor of all beings. So You certainly see their desires with clear insight.

25. Therefore, O Lord, since I am a supplicant, please grant me that

which I seek: I wish to know about both Your higher and lower forms, even though You are devoid of form! 44

26. Invigorated by Your various potencies and through Your own

yogamāyā, You create, support and destroy this universe in Your own self by means of Your self.

27. Your will is infallible. Like a spider [with its web], You surround

Yourself [with Your powers]. 45 So please give me the intelligence to accomplish this matter [of creation], O Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa]!

28. Instructed by You, Bhagavān, I will act without laziness. By Your grace, although endeavoring in the act of creating the species, I will

not be bound by the law of karma.46

29. You have treated me as a friend to another friend, O Lord! When

I undertake the creation of species, I will divide creatures without

any confusion, xed in Your service. But, since I am renowned as

“the unborn one,” let the madness of pride not arise within me.’

30. Śri Bhagavān replied: ‘Follow this knowledge that I have disclosed, along with its accessories (aṅga47), which bestows direct realization of the Truth. It is mystical and intimate knowledge.’

31. By My grace, I bestow upon you realized (perceived) knowledge

of Truth, namely, My own self as I am, My states of being, and My

forms, qualities, and activities.

[The following four verses are considered by certain commentators to contain the essential philosophy of the entire Bhāgavata Purāṇa and are known as the Catuḥ Ślokī, "four verses."]

32. In the beginning [before creation], I alone existed—there was nothing else beyond, neither cause nor e ect. After [creation],

whatever exists is I, and after [annihilation] whatever remains is I.

33. One should know that things which have no objectivity are

revealed or obscured within My own nature because of My māyā, just like light and darkness reveal and obscure things.

34. Just as the great elements [ether, air, re, water, and earth]

have both entered and not entered all beings, so I have also entered

and not entered all beings.48

35. At least this much should be the object of inquiry concerning the

ātman by means of reason and argument49 by a seeker of Truth: that it always exists everywhere.

36. Remain xed in this knowledge by practicing the highest

samādhi, and your good self will never be subject to illusion, age after age."

37. Śrī Śuka said: "After the immortal Lord Hari imparted these instructions to Brahmā, the most eminent among mortals, He

withdrew His form, before Brahmā's very eyes.

38. Brahmā o ered his folded hands in homage to Hari, the object

of the senses, who had disappeared. Being the repository of all living entities, Brahmā then engaged in the creation of this universe,

as he had previously.

39. Once, Brahmā, the overseer of creation and of dharma, desiring the well-being of created beings, observed the yamas and niyamas, 50

principles of yoga, with a desire to accomplish his purpose.

40.–41. O king! Nārada, always true to his vows, was the most beloved of Brahmā's inheritors, and served him with his good

disposition, humility, and discipline. Desiring to hear about the māyā of Viṣṇu, the Lord of māyā, the great bhāgavata sage pleased his father Brahmā.

42. When he saw that Brahmā, the great grandfather of all the worlds, was satis ed, Nārada, the celestial sage, inquired from him

the same thing you are asking me.

43. Since Brahmā, the creator of beings, was pleased, he recited to

his son Nārada this Bhāgavata Purāṇa, distinguished by ten de ning

characteristics.51 It had previously been spoken to him by Bhagavān.

44. Nārada recounted it to the supremely powerful sage Vyāsa on the banks of the Sarasvatī river, O king, as he was meditating on the supreme Brahman.

45. Since you have asked about how this world came from the

cosmic Puruṣa, I will now thoroughly recount how this took place, along with answering other questions."

Book III

The Tale and Teachings of Lord Brahmā, Version II

Book III, Chapter 8

10. At that time, this universe was immersed in water. Viṣṇu had closed His eyes—although His ability to perceive is never obscured

—and was lying alone [upon the waters] on the bed of the king of

serpents (Śeṣa), without exertion. He was waiting for the right time,

and absorbed in the bliss of His own self.

11. With the subtle elements withdrawn within His body, 1 Viṣṇu aroused His power (śakti) of Time, and remained upon those waters, His resting place, just like a re concealed within wood, its potency

remaining latent.

12. After sleeping on the waters for a thousand cycles of the four yugas, the blueprint for creation was revealed by His own power called Time, which had been stirred to action by Him. Then, Viṣṇu

gazed on all the worlds dissolved in His body.

13. This matter within Him was agitated by the guṇa of rajas, which, in turn, had been activated by Time [in the form] of Viṣṇu's glance

permeating subtle matter. After it had been stirred, it manifested forth from the area of His navel.

14. Through the instigation of Time, which awakens karma, this matter sprang up suddenly in the form of a self-manifested calyx of

a lotus, illuminating that vast expanse of water, like the sun.

15. Viṣṇu then entered that lotus. It was a manifestation of all the guṇas, and [contained] the universes. Within it, the one they call Svayambhū (Brahmā, the self-manifest one), the creator and the

Veda personi ed, was manifest.

16. Seated on that lotus stem but not being able to see the worlds

within it, Brahmā moved [his neck] around in space with strained

eyes. As a result of this, he obtained four heads, one for each of the

directions.

17. The lotus was surrounded by the waters bu eted by waves

agitated by the winds which bring about the end of the cosmic cycles (yugas). Mounted upon it, that rst among the celestials could not understand the nature of the worlds, nor even of his own self:

18. "Who am I, this person situated on the top of this lotus? And from where has this solitary lotus on the water come? There must be

something existing here beneath it upon which it is resting."

19. Deliberating in this way, the unborn Brahmā entered the waters

through the bers in the stalk of the lotus. Then he went down the

rough lotus stalk, seeking its source, but could not nd it.

20. As the unborn one was seeking his source in the absolute

darkness, a long time passed by. Time is the weapon that generates

fear in embodied beings and wastes away their life spans, O Vidura.

21. When his endeavor proved unsuccessful, the god desisted from

this, and returned back to his resting place. He sat down, slowly controlled his breath, stilled his mind, and undertook the practice of

the yoga of samādhi. 2

22. After performing the practice of yoga for a period corresponding to a person's life span, wisdom eventually dawned in Brahmā.3

Then, he saw in his heart the appearance of something that he had

never seen before.

23. Brahmā saw a solitary Being lying in the waters [that ll up the

universe] at the end of the yuga cosmic cycle on a couch made up of the coils of the vast cosmic serpent Śeṣa. 4 Śeṣa was white as the

lotus ber, dispelling the darkness with the radiance from the jewels of his myriad hoods.

24. This Being surpassed the beautiful appearance of an emerald mountain with vast golden peaks; with garments of evening clouds;

lled with owers, herbs, waterfalls, and gems; garlanded by forest

owers, and with trees as feet and bamboos as arms.

25. His body, which enveloped the three worlds, could only be

compared to itself in breadth and extension. The [beauty] of His various divine ornaments and garments was enhanced by [the

beauty] of His bodily appearance.5

26. Out of grace, He displayed His feet, which were like lotuses, their charming lea ike toes separated by the luster of their

moonlike nails. These feet ful ll all desires, and are worshipped through various practices by those people seeking to ful ll personal

desires.

27. His face was welcoming, its smile removing the a ictions of the

world. It was decorated with gleaming earrings, reddened by the re ection of His bimba–fruit colored lips, and had a beautiful nose and eyebrows.

28. He was beautifully adorned, with a garment golden as the

lament of a kadamba ower, and with a belt around His waist, dear Vidura. He wore a priceless necklace and His beloved śrīvatsa 6

on His chest.

29. He was like the most majestic of trees in creation, with roots in

brahman, 7 and branches in the form of His thousand arms covered by the choicest gems and valuable armlets, and in the form of shoots

enveloped by the coils of the great serpent Śeṣa.

30. Bhagavān was like a great mountain, the abode of moving and

non-moving entities. He was the companion of Śeṣa, who was

immersed in the water, His thousand heads appearing like golden peaks of the mountain. The kaustubha gem that He wore was like a jewel from the mountain's mines.

31. Hari was bedecked by a garland of forest owers, which was made of His own glories, and which was beauti ed by the

utterances of the Vedas in the form of swarms of bees. He could not

be approached even by the celestial gods of the sun, moon, wind,

and re, and was unassailable, being encircled throughout the three

worlds by His weapons.

32. At that same moment, lord Brahmā, the [future] creator of the

universe, who had the know-how to create the worlds, also saw the

lotus growing from the pond of Viṣṇu's navel, along with his own

self, the waters, the wind, the sky, and nothing else.

33. In uenced by rajas, the seed of action, Brahmā desired to create o spring, but he could only see the aforementioned things to be in

existance. So, inclined toward the act of creation, he xed his mind

on Bhagavān, whose ways are mysterious, and glori ed the Lord, who is praiseworthy.

Book III, Chapter 9

1. Brahmā said: "I have realized you today, after a long period [of

tapas]. It is lamentable that this Your nature, Bhagavān, is not known by embodied beings. Actually, there is nothing other than You—anything else is false. You appear to be manifold because of

the mixture of the guṇas of māyā.

2. This form of Yours was manifest in the beginning out of

compassion for the saintly, so as to reveal its nature as pure consciousness. It is eternally free from tamas, and it is the seed from which hundreds of avatāras manifest. I myself manifest from the lotus growing out of the navel region of this form.

3. O Supreme Being! I do not see anything higher than this form (svarūpa) of Yours; it is pure bliss, inconceivable, and of in nite radiance. It is the cause of the senses and sense objects, and the source of the universe, yet it transcends the universe. I take refuge in You.

4. You are the source of auspiciousness for the world! Perhaps this form was manifest in meditation (dhyāna) to bless we who are Your worshippers. Obeisance to You, Bhagavān! I submit to You! This form is spurned by the unrighteous who live a hellish life.

5. But You never depart from the lotus of the hearts of those people

who imbibe through the channels of their ears the fragrance of Your

lotus feet carried by the wind of the sacred texts. 8 They cling to Your lotus feet with the highest bhakti.

6. For as long as people do not accept Your lotus feet, which bestow

fearlessness, they are a icted by greed, humiliation, unlimited

desire, and lamentation caused by family, body, and possessions.

They are also a icted by the false notion of possessiveness, the root

of all sorrow.

7. Those misfortunate people whose senses are averse to contact with Your Lordship, which removes all inauspiciousness, are worthy

of compassion. Their minds overwhelmed by greed, they engage in

deeds for some petty pleasure, which only lasts for a eeting

moment, and which always ends up being counterproductive.

8. O Viṣṇu! My mind becomes despondent upon observing beings

incessantly tormented by hunger, thirst, and the three humors,9 as well as by winter, summer, wind, and rain. They are also tormented

by their mutual dealings among themselves because of the re of lust, as well as anger, which is so di cult to bear, O Acyuta.

9. O Lord. As long as a person, due to the power of Bhagavān's māyā, sees this body as existing for the purpose of sensual indulgence and

as separate from You, he or she will not surpass this saṁsāra.

Although it is ephemeral, saṁsāra causes abundant su ering as the fruit of action.

10. Even sages in this world are caught up in the cycle of saṁsāra, O

Lord, because of being averse to connecting with You, and their endeavors are destroyed by Fate. Their minds lled with various

desires, they engage their senses in the day with great frustration, and experience insomnia at night, their sleep interrupted constantly.

11. O Lord! The path to You for people is from the connection attained through hearing about You. You reside in the lotus hearts

that are pervaded by bhakti yoga. Out of compassion for Your devotees, You appear in whatever form they meditate upon.

12. Out of compassion for all beings, although One entity, the Lord

is situated as the internal ātman within all the various entities, 10

although He cannot be attained by the unrighteous. But He is not

pleased by the celestial hosts, whose hearts are bound up with material desires, even when worshipped with elaborate

paraphernalia.

13. It is the adoration of You, Bhagavān that is the real purpose of acts by people, whether by means of worship, severe austerities, charity, ritual sacri ce, or other various deeds. Dharma which is o ered to You is never vanquished.

14. I o er obeisance to You, O Supreme Īśvara! Your enjoyment and pastime (līlā-rāsa) is the cause of the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of this universe. 11 You are the wisdom of intelligence by which the illusion of di erences is evaporated. Your wonderful form (svarūpa) is eternal.

15. I revere Him, the unborn One. Those who recite His names, and

the deeds and qualities of His avatāras, which resemble those of humans, at the moment of death, even if they do so

unintentionally, 12 immediately throw o the impurities of many lives and attain the fullness of immortality.”

[Brahmā continues to glorify Hari.]

26. Maitreya said:

“After having seen the source of his own self, by means of his austerity, wisdom, and samādhi, and after having glori ed Him as far as words and thought can allow, Brahmā fell silent, as if exhausted.”

The Tale of Queen Devahūti: The Mystic Powers of Yoga

Yoga Blueprint *The story of sage Kardama and Queen Devahūti is noteworthy in its illustration of the mystic powers that accrue from intense meditational practices (a subject matter that occupies almost a quarter of the Yoga Sūtras). These powers are associated with asceticism throughout the entire history of Indic literature, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain, from the earliest Vedic textual sources right into the ongoing hagiographies of modern mystics. The classic eight mystic powers include prākāmya , the ability to ful ll one’s will, and īsitṛtva , the ability to control and rearrange the elements, which we see in this story in Kardama’s ability to create an aerial palace at will and ll it with desirable objects. Among other supernormal feats, he then expands himself into nine di erent forms (see Yoga Sūtras IV.4–5).*

[Prologue: Kardama, a forest-dwelling ascetic, was o ered the hand of Princess Devahūti, who had long been in love with him. He agreed to the marriage on the condition that as soon as she would beget a child, if she so wished, he would leave and take the vow of sannyāsa , the fourth stage of life as a wandering ascetic. Devahūti agreed to this condition.]

Book III, Chapter 23

1. Maitreya said:

“After her parents had departed, the chaste Devahūti, who was

expert in reading the moods of her husband, served him constantly

with love, just like Bhavānī (Pārvatī) served her husband, Lord Śiva.

2.–3. Dedicated and attentive, O Vidura, and renouncing desire,

deceit, aversion, greed, sinfulness, and pride, Devahūti continuously

satis ed her noble husband through her a ection, service, and

loving words o ered with intimacy, purity of heart, respectfulness,

and self-control.

4.–5. She was submissive and emaciated by observing vows over a long period, and was expecting great blessings from her husband who was more powerful than Destiny. From his side, with a voice

trembling with love, and overwhelmed with a ection, Kardama,

foremost of the divine sages, spoke to Devahūti, the daughter of Manu, who had been so devoted.

6. Kardama said:

‘O daughter of Manu, now I have become pleased by your exceptional service and complete devotion. This body is very dear to embodied beings, but you have neglected it in renunciation for my sake. You have been very dedicated.

7. I now bestow upon you divine vision. See how I, dedicated to the pursuit of the goal of life, have obtained the Lord’s blessings by dint of my yogic practice, learning, samādhi, 13 and austerities (tapas). 14 You have attained those same blessings, through your service to me. These blessings lift one beyond fear and lamentation.

8. What is the use of other material achievements, which are repeatedly destroyed by the raising of the eyebrows of Lord Viṣṇu15 [that is, by Time]? You have attained perfection. Enjoy the divine fortunes you have earned from the performance of your dharma. These are hard to achieve by those types of men who have the perverse ambition of becoming kings.’

9. Kapila was versed in all the spiritual knowledge systems, and when Devahūti observed him speaking in this way, she became free of anxiety. Her smiling face beaming with bashful glances, she replied with her voice slightly choked with love and modesty.

10. Devahūti said: ‘Lord, best of the twice-born brāhmaṇas, naturally I already know that [all] this has been achieved by you, the master

of mystic powers (yogamāyā). But o spring are a more precious gift

to women who have been virtuous [than mystic powers]. Moreover, you once made the promise that one day we would unite intimately.

11. My mind is overwhelmed with love incited by you, but my body,

which is full of sexual desire, is wasted and emaciated. Please make

suitable arrangements in accordance with the scriptures16 so that it can be made attractive. And please create a suitable place [for our

sexual union], my Lord.’”

12. Maitreya said:

“Then, O Vidura, Kardama, desiring the satisfaction of his beloved, situated himself in yogic meditation, and [with his yogic powers] created a ying palace that could travel according to one’s wish.17

13. It was a celestial palace that ful lled all desires. It was replete with all kinds of gems, adorned with pillars of jewels, and generated all types of wealth and prosperity.

14.–15. It was lled with celestial paraphernalia, and was pleasant in all seasons. It was decorated with a variety of ribbons and banners; resplendent with fabrics, assorted linens, silks, and ne cloth; and there were bees inside buzzing about beautiful wreaths and exotic garlands.

16. It was constructed with di erent levels placed one on top of the other. The place was delightful, with seats, fans, couches, and beds placed here and there.

17. It was adorned with various types of artwork placed all about, and was magni cent with emerald oors and coral daises.

18. Resplendent with doors inset with diamonds and with coral thresholds at the entranceway, the palace was crowned with golden urns on its sapphire turrets.

19. It was designed with very valuable arched doorways of gold, and had assorted canopies built into the walls. These walls were

inset with diamonds and rubies that looked like eyes.

20. It echoed here and there with the cooing of ocks of pigeons and swans. These kept ying up again and again, mistaking arti cial

[birds] to be their own kind.

21. Kardama was himself astonished by its pleasure grounds, resting

places, bedchambers, courtyards, and patios, all designed to delight!

22. Kardama, who knew the minds of all creatures,18 addressed himself to his wife, who was staring at this spectacular house, her

mind ill at ease.

23. 'Bathe in this lake, O timid Devahūti, and then ascend into this

palace. It is a sacred place created by Viṣṇu and ful lls the wishes of

human beings.'

24. The lotus-eyed Devahūti, who was wearing dusty clothes and

whose hair was matted, accepted the words of her husband.

25. Her body was covered with dirt and her breasts were speckled

with grime. She entered the sacred pure waters of the Sarasvatī

river.

26. Within a building inside the lake, she saw ten thousand young

girls who were all youthful and as fragrant as lotuses.

27. When they saw Devahūti, the women immediately rose up and

addressed her with folded hands: 'We are your maidservants.

Instruct us as to what we can do for you.'

28. The respectful women bathed the wise Devahūti with costly

bathing paraphernalia, and o ered her new, spotless, ne-quality

cloth.

29. They gave her exquisite, valuable shiny ornaments. They fed her

with foodstu s of every avor, and gave her an inebriating nectar

drink.

30. After this, Devahūti saw herself [in a mirror]: she was clean, wearing spotless garments and a garland, receiving great honor

from the maidservants, and blessed by the gods.

31. Bathed and with washed hair, she was decorated with all kinds of ornaments, bracelets, tinkling golden ankle bells, and a golden necklace.

32. She was adorned with a golden girdle decorated with jewels placed over her hips, a pearl necklace, and golden ornaments of great value.

33. She had beautiful teeth and eyebrows, and her eyes, which

rivaled the lotus, had slightly moist corners. Her face was glowing

with bluish curls.

34. As soon as she thought of her beloved husband, the best of sages, she immediately found herself with her thousand

maidservants in the very place where Kardama was to be found.

35. Upon observing her husband before her and the thousand

maidservants accompanying her, Devahūti fell into a state of

confusion from witnessing his display of yogic power.

36. Devahūti had been bathed clean, and her lovely breasts covered.

Unlike her previous condition, she now appeared e ulgent,

revealing her original beauty.

37. She was beautifully dressed and was being served by the

thousand celestial females. Love arose in the benevolent Kardama,

and he brought Devahūti to the palace.

38. Kardama's [yogic] glory was not dissipated in that palace, even though he was devoted to his beloved and received personal service

from the celestial damsels.19 He was as e ulgent as the beautiful moon, lord of the rows of blooming night lotuses, surrounded by stars in the sky.

39. Praised by the siddhas, perfected beings, 20 he enjoyed for a long time in that palace in the valleys of Meru, king of the mountains.

Delightful with breezes, which are the friends of Cupid, and the auspicious sounds of the Gaṅgā river's descent, 21 these valleys were the pleasure grounds of the celestial guardians of the eight

directions. Surrounded by groups of damsels, Kardama resembled Kuvera, treasurer of the celestials.

40. Fully satis ed, he enjoyed with his wife in the celestial gardens

of Vaiśrambhaka, Surasana, Nandana, Puṣpabhadraka, Caitrarathya,

and in the celestial Mānasa lake.

41. Moving like the wind through the realms of the universe in that

magni cent and resplendent palace, which could travel at his will,

Kardama outdid the celestials in their vehicles.

42. What is there that is di cult to attain for those people whose minds are controlled? They take shelter at Kṛṣṇa's feet, which remove distress.

43. After showing his wife the extent of the wondrous sphere of the universe with all its manifestations, the great yogī returned to his āśrama.

44. Kardama divided his body into nine forms and gave sexual pleasure to his beautiful wife, the daughter of Manu, who was eager for sexual pleasure. They enjoyed for many years; but these passed as if in an instant.

45. Reclining in that palace in the company of her very handsome husband on a magni cent bed, which enhanced sexual pleasure, Devahūti was not aware of the passing of Time.

46. In this manner, through the power of yoga, one hundred years went by in the twinkling of an eye for the couple who were enjoying themselves, eager for sexual pleasure.

47. The powerful Kardama, knower of the ātman and knower of everyone's desires, considered Devahūti as his other half. He divided himself into nine personal forms and deposited his semen in Devahūti.

48. Consequently, Devahūti gave birth that very day to nine female

babies. They were delightful in every limb, and as fragrant as the

red lotus.

49. Seeing her husband setting out to leave home [as per their agreement22], Devahūti, who desired [a son] was smiling externally, but inside her heart was agitated with distress.

50. Her face downcast, she scratched the ground with her foot, with

its beautiful jewel-like nails, and spoke sweetly with her charming

voice, holding back her tears.

51. Devahūti said: 'Everything that you promised me, my Lord, I have received. Nonetheless, dedicated as I am to you, kindly provide

me with security.

52. O brāhmaṇa, your daughters will nd suitable husbands for themselves. But there should be someone to free me from anxiety when you set out for the forest.

53. Enough of wasting so much of my time in attachment to sense

indulgence. [On account of this], I had given up [seeking] the Supreme Soul, my lord.

54. Attached to you, I indulged in sense grati cation, ignorant of your higher nature. Despite this, please bestow fearlessness upon me.

55. Attachment, when placed in unrighteous people out of

ignorance, is the cause of saṁsāra; but when placed in the righteous, it leads to nonattachment. 23

56. A person whose work in this world does not lead to dharma, or to detachment, or to the service of Viṣṇu, is actually as good as dead, even though living.

57. I am surely such a person: I have been utterly deceived by the

Lord's illusion (māyā) because, despite obtaining you, the giver of liberation, I did not desire liberation from bondage.'"

Book III, Chapter 24

1. Maitreya said:

“The compassionate sage, remembering what had previously been declared by Viṣṇu, 24 replied to the praiseworthy daughter of Manu, who was speaking despondently in this way.

2. The sage said:

‘Do not torment yourself in this manner, O princess: you are

blameless. The infallible Lord will shortly enter your womb.

3. May you be blessed: you have been rm in your vows. Worship

Īśvara with faith, charity, wealth, austerities, moral observances (niyama), 25 and sense control.

4. Viṣṇu, as your son, will spread my fame. Worshipped by you, [He

will impart to you] teachings on the subject of Brahman and cut the knot in your heart.’” 26

5. Maitreya said:

“With great respect, Devahūti fully trusted the advice of Kardama,

who was one of the prajāpatis. 27 She worshipped the Supreme Soul (puruṣa), who is the most worthy of worship.

6. After the passing of many moons, the Lord, Madhusūdana

[Viṣṇu]28 entered into the seed of Kardama and took birth from Devahūti, like re from wood.

7. At that time, hosts of clouds and musical instruments resounded

in the sky. Celestial gandharvas sang and apsarās danced joyfully.29

8. Divine owers fell, thrown by celestials traveling in the

heavens,30 and everything became pure: the directions, the waters, and people’s minds.

9. Brahmā, along with sages such as Marīci, 31 arrived at the location of Kardama’s āśrama, which was encircled by the Sarasvatī river.

10. Brahmā, who is unborn and self-manifest, 32 knew that the Supreme Godhead had taken birth through His pure partial

manifestation. 33

11. O ering homage to Lord Viṣṇu with pure mind, his spirits

enlivened because of that which the Lord intended to do [teach the

truths of Sāṅkhya], Brahmā spoke as follows to Kardama.

12. Brahmā said: ‘I have been fully honored by you without o ense,

my dear Kardama. You are respectful to others and have respected

my instruction that I previously imparted to you.

13. Sons should perform service to the father in exactly this manner.

One should accept the words of the guru with gravity, saying: "This will de nitely be done."

14. These chaste daughters of yours with beautiful waists, dear Kardama, will certainly increase this creation manifold with their own progeny.

15. Therefore, bestow your daughters in marriage today, according

to their wishes and personalities, to the best of the sages, and thereby spread your fame throughout the world.

16. O sage, I know that the original Person [Viṣṇu] has incarnated

by His own power and assumed a body as Kapila, a treasure trove

for all beings.

17. He has golden hair, lotus eyes, and lotus feet marked with the

lotus.34 By means of yoga, wisdom, and knowledge, He will pull out the roots of action performed in ignorance. 35

18. He, Viṣṇu, the destroyer of the demon Kaitabha,36 has entered your womb, O Devahūti, daughter of Manu. After cutting your knot

of doubt and illusion, He will wander over the earth.

19. This son will be known in the world as Kapila, and will be highly esteemed by the great teachers of the Sāṅkhya knowledge

system.37 He will wander about spreading your fame.'"

20. Maitreya said:

“After encouraging the couple, Brahmā, ‘the Swan,’38 the creator of the Universe, returned on his swan carrier back to his abode, the highest place in the three realms,39 accompanied by the four Kumāras40 along with Nārada.41

21. O Vidura, Kardama, who received instructions from Brahmā in

this way, did as had been instructed. After Brahmā had departed, he

bestowed his daughters to the progenitors of the universe.42

[…]

26. When Kardama understood that Viṣṇu, chief of the gods, had incarnated, he approached Him in private, o ered Him homage, and

addressed Him: 27. ‘At last, after a long time the gods are de nitely

pleased with those who are burning in hell due to their own

misdeeds.43

28. Ascetics in secluded places strive to see God’s feet by means of

pure concentration (samādhi) in undeviating yoga practice that has matured over many births. 44

29. That same Supreme Bhagavān has today taken birth in the homes of vulgar folk such as us. Disregarding our o enses, He

nourishes the aspirations of His devotees.

30. Bhagavān broadcasts the fame of His devotees. You have incarnated in my house desiring to establish the knowledge [of

Sāṅkhya philosophy] and ful ll Your promise truthfully.

31. [Although] You are without [material] forms, whatever forms

please Your devotees are pleasing to You, O Bhagavān! 45

32. I o er homage to You. Even Your footstool46 is always worthy of worship by sages desiring to understand the Truth. You possess

complete beauty, potency, knowledge, fame, renunciation, and

power. 47

33. I o er respects to You, Kapila. Your power manifests simply by dint of Your own will. You are the maintainer of the worlds, and You are the three guṇas. 48 Through Your intelligence You absorb the material manifestation back into Your own self. You are the Supreme Person, the creation, cosmic Intelligence, Time, and the wise Seer of Truth.

34. Today I am submitting a request to You, O Lord of beings: following the path of the roaming ascetics, I wish to wander forth,

free from sorrow, connected to You in my heart. All my obligations

have been erased by You, and all my desires ful lled.'

35. The Lord said:

‘Whatever is spoken by Me in worldly or spiritual matters is

authoritative for people in the world. This is the reason for My taking birth in your family: to ful ll what I previously told you, O

sage.

36. This birth of Mine in this world is to reestablish the teachings of

Sāṅkhya—the analysis of the ingredients of material reality. This knowledge in the matter of self-realization is highly esteemed by

those desiring liberation from the subtle body.49

37. This path toward realization of the soul is di cult to

understand, and so had disappeared, lost due to the passing of the

ages. Please know that I have assumed this body in order to

reestablish it. 50

38. Go as you please, with My approval. Overcome Death, which is

so hard to overcome, by dedicating all your actions to Me; worship

Me to [attain] the state of immortality.

39. I am self-luminous, the hidden refuge within all beings. Without

anxieties, you will perceive Me, the [Supreme] Ātman, in [your

own] ātman through the ātman.51 At that time you will attain the state of fearlessness.

40. I will impart spiritual knowledge, which puts an end to all karma, to My mother. By this knowledge, she will overcome fear.’”

41. Maitreya said:

“Kardama, the progenitor of species (prajāpati), addressed in this way by Kapila, circumambulated Him, 52 and joyfully set out for the forest.

42. The sage, xed in the vow of silence and absorbed in the ātman, wandered forth over the earth, without any company, without

residence, and neglecting the sacred ritualistic re.53

43. He xed his mind on Brahman, which is beyond the real and unreal. 54 Although it itself is devoid of the guṇa qualities (sattva, rajas, tamas), yet it is through Brahman that the guṇas are manifest. 55

It can be experienced only by exclusive devotion. 56

44. Kardama was without ego, without sense of ownership, beyond

all dualities, 57 perceiving all beings equally, and the seer of his own inner self. He was xed, his mind peacefully turned inward, like an

ocean whose waves are calm.58

45. Freed from the bonds of (saṁsāra), he realized his own self by means of the highest devotion to God, Vāsudeva, the omniscient

inner Soul.

46. He saw God, Bhagavān, as the Supreme Soul situated within all beings, and all beings within Bhagavān, the Supreme Soul.

47. With his mind free from desire and aversion, and seeing

everything equally, Kardama attained the divine destination by

engaging in devotion to God.”

The Teachings of Lord Kapila: Sāṅkhya Yoga

Yoga Blueprint *The result of the union between Kardama and Devahūti is the birth of Kapila, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa informs us in the Bhagavad Gītā (IV.7–8) that He descends into the world, among other reasons, to reestablish dharma . This is the bhakti notion of avatāra , the incarnating of Viṣṇu into the world in times of need. Of particular relevance to Yoga, however, is that tradition recognizes Kapila as the original expounder of the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy. 59*

Yoga operates within the metaphysical contours provided by the Sāṅkhya principles—indeed, while later tradition pairs Sāṅkhya and Yoga as "sister schools," earlier sources, including the Gītā (V.4–5) consider them one and the same—Sāṅkhya providing the metaphysics, and Yoga the practices relevant to liberating the soul, ātman/puruṣa , from the world of matter, prakṛti . 60

Kapila's instructions to his mother represent classic Yoga teachings embedded in the highly devotionalized context of bhakti . This section contains some of the most important core teachings of the Bhāgavata : many of the verses illustrating the teachings of bhakti in part 1 are found in these instructions. Particularly noteworthy are the teachings on the experience of birth, as well as on the process of dying and the fate awaiting those who have squandered their human life after the moment of death.

Book III, Chapter 25

1. Śaunaka spoke: "Although He Himself is actually unborn, Kapila,

who is Bhagavān in person, took birth through His spiritual potency as the expounder of Sāṅkhya philosophy, so as to impart knowledge

of the ātman to mankind.

2. My life force61 is never satiated from repeatedly hearing about the Lord of the Vedas. 62 He is the best of men, and the foremost of all yogīs.

3. Please narrate to me whatever deeds the Lord performed through

His own potency and out of His inherent free will. I am a faithful soul, and these deeds are praiseworthy."

4. Sūta replied: "At this, feeling pleased at being requested in this way about metaphysical subjects, the noble Maitreya, the friend of Vyāsa, proceeded to speak the following words to Vidura."

5. Maitreya said:

“After His father had set out for the forest, Lord Kapila resided there in that forest of Bindusara, desiring to please His mother, Devahūti.

6. One day, remembering the words of Brahmā, the creator,

Devahūti asked her son, when He was sitting leisurely, to disclose

the highest path to Truth.”

7. Devahūti said: “I am completely disgusted with the illusory thirst

for sense pleasure, O Lord. I have fallen into a state of darkest ignorance, O Master.

8. You are the guide over that dense darkness of ignorance (tamas), which is so di cult to overcome. By Your grace, today, after many

births, I have gained my eye of Truth.

9. Your Lordship is truly the Primeval God, the Supreme Īśvara of humankind. You are the eye of the world, which is blinded by

ignorance (tamas). You are like the risen sun [which dispels darkness].

10. This impediment in this life—the notion of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine’

[the ego]—was created by You. 63 Therefore, it is You, O Lord, who should dispel my illusion.

11. I o er homage to You. You are the supreme Knower of the real

goal of life. I desire to know about [the relationship between] puruṣa and prakṛti (spirit and matter). I have submitted myself to You for refuge, because You are worthy of refuge. You are the axe [that cuts] the tree of saṁsāra for Your dependents.”

12. Maitreya said:

“Kapila, His handsome face gently smiling, listened to the faultless

request of His mother, and welcomed it in His mind. A request such

as this advances the goal of liberation for saintly people who are self-controlled.”

13. The Lord said:

“I hold the Yoga system directed toward the ātman to be the highest goal for humankind. From this comes the ultimate detachment from

happiness and distress.

14. Today, I will explain to you that same Yoga system that I imparted of old, 64 O sinless lady, inclusive of all its limbs (sarva-aṅga). 65 This is the yoga of the sages who are eager to hear.

15. Consciousness is considered to be [inclined] toward either

bondage or liberation. Attached to the guṇas [it experiences]

bondage; on the other hand, devoted to the Supreme Person, [it experiences] liberation. 66

16. When the mind is freed from the impurities of desire and greed,

etc., which are produced from the false notion of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and

‘mine,’ it becomes pure, equipoised, and transcends happiness and

distress.

17. When this occurs, a person [realizes] the soul as autonomous,

transcendent to prakṛti, eternal, self-e ulgent, minute, and indivisible.

18. When consciousness is immersed in knowledge and renunciation

as well as devotion, one realizes that prakṛti acts with indi erence; 67

through this realization, its power is dispelled.

19. There is no auspicious path for yogīs to attain Brahman that is comparable to the practice of bhakti to Bhagavān, who is the Universal Soul.

20. The sages know that it is attachment that is the ever-present snare of the soul. Yet, when directed to the sādhus (ascetics), attachment opens the door to liberation. 68

21. The virtues69 of a sādhu are tolerance, compassion, friendship toward all beings, holding no enemies, and peacefulness.

22. Sādhus perform staunch bhakti to Me with undeviating minds.

For My sake, they have abandoned all actions, and they have

renounced family and friends.

23. Fully absorbed in Me, they hear and narrate the relishable narratives of My activities. The various su erings [of the world] do

not a ict them, since their consciousness is absorbed in Me.

24. These sādhus, O virtuous lady, are free of all attachments—

indeed, they themselves remove the faults of attachment [from

others]. So you should aspire for their association.

25. From association with saints, the realization of My power arises.

These narratives of My activities become pleasing to the ears and the heart. By enjoying them, faith, love, and devotion quickly

manifest consecutively on the path to liberation.

26. By means of bhakti and the contemplation of My creations, a person experiences the arising of detachment from sensual pleasure

—whether pleasure experienced in the past or heard about in

scripture.70 Engaged on the path of yoga, and intent on the control of the mind, such a person will persevere with correct yogic practices.

27. Such a person, through not dedicating himself or herself to the

guṇas of prakṛti, but rather through dedication to knowledge, the cultivation of detachment, yoga focused on Me, and bhakti, attains Me, while still in this world. I am the innermost Soul."

28. Devahūti said: "What type of bhakti to You is optimal, and what should my sense activity be, by means of which I can easily attain

Your abode, nirvāṇa? 71

29. O You who are the essence of nirvāṇa, what is the nature of that Yoga centered on Bhagavān that You previously spoke about? 72 How many limbs of yoga (yoga-aṅgas) are there, by which [one attains]

an understanding of Truth?

30. Explain those to me, a woman, 73 O Lord, such that I can easily understand that which is di cult to understand by your grace. My

understanding of such things is limited."

31. Maitreya said:

"After understanding the intention of His mother in this way, Kapila

felt love for her—He had, after all, taken birth from her body. So He

spoke to her about the knowledge of Truth transmitted down

[through the ages] that they call Sāṅkhya, as well as about the yoga of the various forms of bhakti."

32.–33. The Lord said: "Bhakti to Bhagavān has no cause. It consists of sattva in the activities of the senses74 and it includes the performance of action prescribed by scripture. It is the natural state of the mind when it is xed [on God], and is more profound than

[conventional] liberation. Bhakti dissolves the subtle body quickly, 75

just like the digestive re burns food that has been eaten.

34. The bhāgavata devotees associate among each other and celebrate My deeds [when I incarnate in the world]. Their

endeavors are devoted to Me, and they are satis ed in serving My

feet. 76 Some of them do not desire to attain oneness with Me. 77

35. These saints, O mother, perceive My beautiful Divine forms, with their reddish eyes78 and smiling faces, and they converse with them with pleasing words. These forms bestow blessings.

36. Bhakti leads those whose hearts and life forces have been captivated by those forms to My subtle abode, 79 even if they did not desire this. These forms have captivating limbs, sweet words,

smiling glances, and perform wondrous pastimes.

37. I am the Lord of māyā, but these saints do not desire My majesty, nor Godly opulence, 80 nor the power that ensues from the eight-limbed path of yoga, 81 nor the beauty of the Supreme.82 They nonetheless attain all these in My abode. 83

38. O mother, you are the embodiment of peacefulness. Those who

place Me as the Supreme will never perish, and My weapon, the ever-vigilant Time, does not destroy them. For such people, I am

their intimate soul, the son, friend, teacher, well-wisher, and beloved deity.

39.–40. They have renounced this world, as well as that world

beyond [the celestial realms],84 and the [subtle] body that travels between both of them. In this world they have renounced

everything—friends and family, wealth, livestock, and household—

and they worship Me alone, the all-observing Godhead, with

exclusive devotion. I take these devotees to the place beyond death.

41. The oppressing fear [of death] cannot be removed by any means

other than by I Myself, Bhagavān, the Īśvara of puruṣa and prakṛti, and Supreme Ātman of all beings.

42. Out of fear of Me, the wind blows, out of fear of Me, the sun

burns, and out of fear of Me, Indra85 makes the rain pour and Death perform its task.

43. Immersed in knowledge and renunciation and engaged in bhakti

yoga, the yogīs fearlessly take shelter of My feet for deliverance.

44. The mind xed on Me through the ardent practice of bhakti yoga

becomes steady. It is only in this manner that ultimate perfection manifests in people in this world."

Book III, Chapter 26

[We have omitted this chapter as it includes a highly technical and theistic rendition of the evolution of the Sāṅkhya metaphysical categories.]

Book III, Chapter 27

1. The Lord said:

“Although situated in prakṛti, the soul is not a ected by the guṇas of prakṛti. This is because it is unchanging, is not an agent, and is transcendent to the guṇas. It is like the sun [re ected] on the water[86]

[which remains unchanged although its re ection in the water may appear to change].

2. When this soul is absorbed in the guṇas of prakṛti, deluded by the

ego,[87] it thinks: ‘I am the doer.’

3. Because of this, one enters the state of saṁsāra against one’s will, and is frustrated. As a result of becoming entangled with the

negative consequences of action, [88] one [nds himself] in good, bad, or mixed births.

4. Although the objects do not actually exist[89]—just like the appearance of misfortunes in a dream— saṁsāra nonetheless does not cease for one who contemplates the objects of the senses.

5. Therefore, by the intense practice of bhakti yoga, one should gradually make the mind, which has been attached to the path of

illusion, indi erent [to the objects of the senses], and bring it under

control.

6. Endowed with faith, one should [bring the mind under control]

by practicing the principles of yoga—the yamas (moral precepts), etc., [90] and listening to narratives about Me with real a ection for Me.

7. Detached, [one should control the mind] by equanimity to all creatures, by being hostile to none, by celibacy, by silence, and by

the performance of one's duty which has become more powerful [by

being o ered to God].

8. The sage is satis ed with whatever comes spontaneously. He is measured in eating, dwells in a solitary place, and is peaceful, friendly, compassionate, and self-possessed.

9. By dint of knowledge and perceiving the reality of prakṛti and puruṣa, he does not create false attachments to this body and its relationships.

10. Transcending the states of the intelligence91 and renouncing all other conceptions, the seer of the self realizes the self by means of

the self, 92 as clearly as one sees the sun with one's eyes.

11. He perceives it as distinct from the subtle body, a re ection of the real in the unreal.93 It is the true existent, the friend, the perceiver of that which is nonreal and nondual, and it is that which

pervades all reality.

12. This is just like when one's re ection in water is seen by one standing on land. It is like the sun which is perceived through its re ection situated in a body of water although it itself is situated in

the heavens.

13. In this way, the threefold ego [in sattva, rajas, and tamas] is characterized by its re ections made of the mind, senses, and

physical body. It is through this ego, which contains the re ection

of the truth, that the ātman, the seer, is realized.94

14. When the gross and subtle elements, mind, and intelligence, etc.,

are merged in prakṛti during sleep, the seer remains awake, free of ego.

15. At the time of deep sleep, when the ego has ceased to function,

the seer falsely thinks that the self has ceased to be, although it has

not ceased to be, just like a person who is a icted when his or her

wealth has been lost.

16. Contemplating this, one realizes that the one who is the support

and animator of all things including the ego, is the ātman."

17. Devahūti said: "O brāhmaṇa, prakṛti can never free the puruṣa, because of the mutual interdependence of the two of them since beginningless time.

18. Just as the existence of smell can never be separate from the element of earth, or taste from water, so in the same way the intelligence (buddhi) can never be separated from the higher self, the ātman.

19. How can liberation occur while the guṇas are still active? The bondage of karma envelops the passive puruṣa within them.

20. Sometimes, through contemplation on the true nature of reality,

the great fear [of saṁsāra] can be curbed somewhat. But because its

cause has not ceased, it again reappears."

21.–23. Śrī Bhagavān said: "By performing one's dharma with a pure mind without attachment to the results; by intense bhakti to Me over a long period of time nourished with hearing about Me; by

knowledge, which perceives the true nature of the world; by strong

detachment; by the practices of yoga performed with austerity (tapas); and by intense concentration on the ātman, prakṛti, which engulfs the puruṣa day and night, gradually disappears, just like the wooden kindling stick that produces re becomes consumed [by the re].

24. Prakṛti's imperfections have been experienced so many times, and she has been renounced in the past after her sensual pleasures

(bhoga) have been exhausted. At this point, she can no longer create imperfections for the ātman, which is now situated in its own glory.

25. This is just like a dream, which brings many inauspicious images

to a sleeping mind, yet is not able to cause delusion for one who is

awake.

26. In the same way, prakṛti can never cause harm for one who has seen the nature of reality, whose mind is xed on Me, and who delights in the ātman.

27. After a period of many lifetimes, the sage who delights in his own ātman in this manner is completely detached from everything

up to the highest celestial realm of Brahmā.

28.–29. My bhakta, awakened to his true purpose, easily attains by My abundant grace his own ultimate nature, perfection, known as

liberation (kaivalya) even while still in this world. When he has become detached from the subtle body, the yogī is xed and his doubts are destroyed by dint of directly perceiving his true nature.

After attaining this, he never returns [to the world of saṁsāra].

30. When the mind of the perfected yogī is not attracted by the powers accumulated from yoga practice, which is the only way of

acquiring them, then he attains My ultimate destination, My dear mother, and death can no longer gloat."

Book III, Chapter 28

1. Śrī Bhagavān said: "I will describe to you the characteristics of sabīja yoga, O princess [when the mind is xed undeviating on an

object].95 By this practice, the mind becomes joyful, and undoubtedly attains the path to Truth.

2. It includes: performing one's duties (dharma) to the best of one's capabilities, refraining from unrighteousness, contentment with

what is obtained by Providence, worshipping the feet of those who

know the ātman. 96

3. Giving up mundane dharma and attraction to the dharma of

liberation,97 the moderate intake of pure foodstu s, and living always in a solitary peaceful place.

4. One should practice nonviolence (ahiṁsā), truthfulness (satya), nonstealing (asteya), and adopt only as many possessions as required (yāvadartha-parigrahaḥ). One should practice celibacy (brahmacarya), austerity (tapaḥ), cleanliness (śauca), study (svādyāya), and worship the Supreme Being (Puruṣārcana). 98

5. Observing silence, one should become xed [in a sitting posture]

by mastering the appropriate āsanas, gradually mastering breath control (prāṇa-jaya), and practicing withdrawal of the senses from sense objects (pratyāhāra), with the mind xed on the heart.

6. One should x the breath on one of the cakras (subtle energy centers)99 of the body with one's mind. One should contemplate the activities of Lord Viṣṇu and become absorbed (samādhāna) in that way.

7. By these and other processes, alert, and with controlled breath,

one should gradually x one's mind, which is prone to corrupt and

unspiritual ways, with one's intelligence.

8. Once one has mastered āsana one should establish a seat (āsana)100 in a clean place, and, sitting comfortably with the body erect, one should

perform practice.

9. One should cleanse the passageway of the air by performing pūra-

kumbhaka-recaka breath restraints101 or by the reverse processes, such that the mind (citta) can become xed and undistracted.

10. The mind of the yogī whose breath is controlled should soon become puri ed, just as iron, [melted by] re and fanned by wind,

releases its impurities.

11. By prāṇāyāma one can burn imperfections;102 by dhāraṇā, one's sins; by pratyāhāra, contact with sense objects; and by dhyāna, ungodly tendencies.

12. When one's mind is perfectly controlled by the practice of yoga, with one's gaze xed on the tip of the nose, 103 one should meditate on the form of Bhagavān.

13. He has pleasing lotuslike features, with reddish eyes like the interior of a lotus, and is dark like the petals of the blue lotus. He

bears a conch, discus, and club.

14. His shiny silken garments are yellow like the lament of a lotus,

the kaustubha jewel adorns His neck, and the mark of śrīvatsa His chest. 104

15. His neck is encircled by a forest garland with intoxicated humming bees swarming about it, and He is adorned by a

magni cent necklace, bracelets, helmet, armlets, and anklets.

16. His hips are adorned with a brilliantly shining girdle, and He is

seated in the lotus of the heart. His countenance is serene and He

has the most beautiful appearance, gladdening the eyes and the

mind.

17. He is eternally gorgeous to behold, and is worshipped by the entire universe. He has the youthful vigor of the prime of youth, and

is anxious to bestow His blessings upon His devotees.

18. The glories of this exalted person are worthy of recitation in hymns, and bring renown to pious people [who glorify Him]. One

should perform meditation (dhyāna) upon the entire form of the Lord, until the mind no longer deviates.

19. The activities of the Lord are always attractive. Therefore, with

the mind full of pure love, one should meditate upon Him in the core of one's heart as standing, walking, sitting, or lying down.

20. When the mind has attained xed concentration focused on all

His limbs together, the sage should then visualize and x the mind

on Bhagavān's respective limbs, one by one."

[A detailed visualization of each of Bhagavān 's limbs follows here.]

34. A person, at this point, with heart owing with love for the Lord, Hari, Bhagavān; with hair standing on end from ecstasy; and constantly overwhelmed with streams of tears from intense love,

gradually withdraws the hook of the citta.105

35. At this stage, the mind suddenly attains liberation (nirvāṇa), and enters the state of freedom, detached and without objects, like the

ame of a lamp [when it is extinguished]. Freed from the ow of

the guṇas, one now perceives the ātman, fully manifest and autonomous.

36. The yogī, as a result of this supreme dissolution of the mind, becomes situated in the wonders of the ātman. Attaining the nature of the higher self, the yogī realizes that the cause of the experiences of pleasure and pain (duḥkha) that one had previously attributed to one's own self, were actually occurring in the ahaṅkāra, which has no ultimate and enduring reality.

37. The highest yogī, who has realized his or her own true nature as ātman, is not aware of whether the body is sitting or standing, or whether, by chance, it has reached somewhere or else departed

under the control of Fate, just like one who is blinded by

intoxication is not aware of whether one is covered by clothing or not.

38. The body along with its life airs remains under the control of Fate for as long as its karma, which has already been activated, has not expired.106 But the yogī who has attained samādhi and awakened to the reality of things does not again accept it or its expansions as real, but rather as just a dream.

39. Just as a mortal being is seen as di erent from sons and wealth,

even though they are considered to be one's own, so is the case with

the puruṣa, which is seen as di erent from the body and its extensions.

40.–41. Just as re is di erent from the rebrand and the sparks and smoke produced from it—it is in fact di erent even from the very rebrand that is considered identical to it, so the ātman, who is the seer, is di erent from the sense objects, senses, and internal organ. And Bhagavān, who is known as Brahman, is di erent both from prakṛti and from that which is called jīva.

42. One should see all beings in the ātman and the ātman in all beings, by dint of the fact that all beings have the same nature within the material elements.

43. Just as re, although one, appears di erent according to its sources, so the ātman situated in prakṛti appears di erent due to the diversity in its embodiments [but is one].

44. Therefore, after transcending one's own prakṛti, which is divine and very hard to comprehend, and which has the nature of cause and e ect, one becomes situated in one's own true nature.

Book III, Chapter 29

1.–2. Devahūti said: "You have described the characteristics of

mahat (cosmic intelligence)107 etc., and of prakṛti and puruṣa and the higher nature of these two as outlined in the Sāṅkhya traditions.

Now please tell me about their root, the path of bhakti yoga.

Describe this to me in detail, O Lord.

3. Narrate the various destinations in saṁsāra of the embodied jīvas.

From hearing about these complete detachment can arise in the

puruṣa, O Lord.

4. Please tell me about that manifestation of Īśvara called Time, which is the controller of even the higher celestials. It is because of

[the fear of] Time that people perform pious activities.

5. You have appeared as the shining light of yoga for those people who are spiritually blind due to false understanding and who have

have been sleeping under the false security of tamas for such a long time. They are exhausted because their minds are devoted to

activities performed for the satisfaction of desire."

6. Maitreya said:

“The great sage welcomed these gentle words of his mother, O best

of the Kurus. Pleased and overwhelmed with compassion, He replied

to her.”

7. Śri Bhagavān said: “Bhakti yoga has many di erent forms, which manifest in di erent ways, O noble lady! These ways are

di erentiated in accordance with their natural guṇas. And the mental states of people are distinguished in accordance to these ways.

8. A person considering himself di erent from others, who performs

bhakti to Me out of a motive involving violence, pride, or envy, is one in tamas, full of anger.

9. A person considering himself di erent from others, who engages

in acts of worshipping the deity with a motive involving desire for

sense objects, fame, or power, is in rajas.

10. A person considering himself di erent from others, who engages in worship for the purpose of eliminating karma, or as an o ering to the Supreme, or because worship is something that ought to be

done, is in sattva.

11.–12. The characteristic of bhakti yoga that transcends the guṇas (nirguṇa) is described as when the mind ows without cessation toward Me, simply from hearing about My qualities. I am the most

intimate refuge. This bhakti toward Puruṣottama, the Supreme Being, is uninterrupted and free of all motives (ahaitukī).

13. Devotees do not accept the ve types of liberation— salokya, living on the same realm as Me; sārṣṭi, having the same opulence as Me; sāmīpya, living in My association; sārūpya, having the same form as Me; and ekatvam, undi erentiated oneness with Me—even when these are awarded, if they are devoid of My service.108

14. It is this latter which has been described as the highest type of

what goes by the name bhakti yoga. By this one transcends the three guṇas and attains My abode.

15.–19. Through worship and through performing one's duty

without attachment to the results; through regular lavish acts of ritual worship which do not involve any violence; through seeing,

touching, o ering pūjā (ritual worship) and praise, and honoring My deities; through considering Me to be in all living entities; through

sattva; through detachment; through o ering respect to the great saints; through compassion to the less fortunate; through friendship

with those who are one's equals and through following the yamas and niyamas (moral virtues); by hearing spiritual discourses; by chanting My name congregationally (nama- saṅkīrtana); through uprightness and association with noble people; through abandoning ego; through these qualities the mind of a person dedicated to Me

becomes puri ed. Then he or she easily draws close to Me, simply

by hearing of My qualities.

20. Just as the ow of wind delivers a smell from its source to the nose, so the mind devoted to yoga is carried to the Supreme.

21. I am always present in the ātmans of all beings. 109 A person disregarding this performs deity worship in the temple that is

hypocritical.

22. One who worships Me in the form of the Deity, but, out of ignorance, disregards Me as Īśvara in the form of the ātman residing in all beings, o ers only ashes.

23. The mind of a person who does not see others as equal,

honoring Me but hating other entities, who is xed in hostility with

other beings, does not attain peace.

24. O sinless lady, I am not satis ed when I am worshipped in the

Deity through the performance of rituals conducted with all sorts of

paraphernalia by a person who is disrespectful of other living

beings.

25. One should worship Me as Īśvara through deity worship and such things, performing one's duty, until one sees Me in one's own

heart, and situated in the hearts of all beings.

26. To one who makes a distinction between his own belly and that

of others, I in ict great fear in the form of Death. Such a person does not see all beings as equal.

27. Therefore, by means of charity, respect, and friendship, and with

equanimity, one should honor Me as residing as the embodied ātman

in all beings.

28. Living entities are superior to nonliving entities, O pious lady,

and among them, those that have life airs (prāṇa) are higher. From these, those that have developed minds (citta) are higher, and from these in turn, those with sense perception are higher still.

29. Even among these, those that have the sense of taste are higher

than those who have the sense of touch, and higher than these are

those with the sense of smell, while those with the sense of hearing

are superior.

30. Entities who can distinguish forms are higher than these, and from these those with teeth in two jaws. From these, many-legged

creatures are higher, from which the quadrupeds are best, and the

two-legged beings higher still.

31. From these, those who respect the fourfold caste division of society are better, and from these, the brāhmaṇas are best. From among the brāhmaṇas, the knower of the Veda is higher, and better than him, the one who knows the true meaning of the Vedas.

32. One who can remove all doubts is better still, and one who performs his or her dharma superior again. Higher still than this is the performance of dharma free of all attachments, without seeking any bene t for oneself.

33. From all these, the soul who has completely dedicated his or her

wealth and works to Me is best of all. I do not consider any living

entity superior to a person whose soul is dedicated to Me, who has

renounced all works to Me, who realizes he or she is not the ultimate doer of action, 110 and who sees all beings equally.

34. One should honor all these living beings with one's mind,

considering that it is Īśvara, Bhagavān, who has entered them in the form of his partial manifestation, 111 the jīva (embodied ātman).

35. My dear lady, I have explained to you both bhakti yoga and the eight-limbed path of generic yoga. By means of either one of these, a person may attain the puruṣa.

36. This puruṣa is transcendent to prakṛti. It is a form of Bhagavān, who is Brahman, the Paramātman, and Destiny, the force behind karma.

37. That which is the source of the changes in the forms of all matter from mahat (buddhi, the macro cosmic intelligence),112 to the microatoms of Sāṅkhya, is known as divine Time. It is because of Time that those who do not see the oneness behind all things113

experience fear.

38. The one who enters all entities, who is the sustainer of everything, and who annihilates them through other entities is

known as Viṣṇu. He is Time, the Master of all rulers. He is the Lord

of sacri ce.

39. No one is dear to Him, no one an enemy, and no one a friend.

Ever vigilant, He approaches in the form of Death those people who

are forgetful.

40. It is out of fear of Him that the wind blows, it is out of fear of

Him that the sun shines, it is out of fear of Him that the god Indra

showers rain, and it is out of fear of Him that the host of stars shine.

41. It is because of Him that the trees along with the plants and creepers bear their fruits and owers at their appropriate times.

42. It is because of Him that the frightened rivers ow, that the ocean does not rise up beyond its bounds, that re blazes, and the

earth along with its mountains does not collapse.

43. It is under the control of Him that the sky provides space for all

breathing creatures, and the rst macro-evolute of prakṛti, the mahat, expands its body into the universe, covered by its seven sheaths. 114

44. It is out of fear of Him that the divinities, who oversee the functions of the guṇas,115 and in whose power lie all moving and non-moving entities, perpetuate creation, maintenance, and

destruction in every yuga, age.

45. Time is the eternal destroyer. It has no beginning but is the cause of all beginnings. It causes the birth and destruction of people

through other people. It brings death even to the celestial Yama, the

Lord of death."

Book III, Chapter 30

1. Kapila said:

“People do not realize the mighty power of this Time. They are like a row of clouds, impelled forward by a powerful wind.

2. Whatever object a person attains after great di culty for the purpose of nding happiness, Bhagavān destroys. The person then laments when this happens.

3. It is because of illusion that a person believes the household, property, and possessions of this vulnerable body, along with its relationships, to be stable.

4. Irrespective of whatever womb one transmigrates into in this worldly existence, once there, one nds satisfaction in that species;

one never becomes averse to it.

5. Bewildered by the divine māyā, even when situated in hell, one does not wish to relinquish even that birth, as one nds one’s pleasure in hellish experiences.

6. A person whose heart has been deeply captivated by friends, wealth, livestock, homestead, o spring, wife, and body thinks

himself great.

7. With every limb of his body burning with anxiety created by these, an evil-minded fool engages in never-ending sins.

8. His senses and mind are stolen by the enchantment of unchaste

women in the form of sweet words conducted in secret encounters,

and by the sweet babblings of his young children.

9. Ever committed to the false dharma of the household which only produces unhappiness, the householder thinks himself happy when

working to counteract the su ering.

10. He maintains his family with wealth secured by means of great

violence from here or there. Although he himself ends up consuming

only whatever remnants are left over, it is he who attains lower births because of his [methods of] maintaining them.

11. When his means of livelihood fails, he tries again and again.

Overpowered by greed, and becoming feeble, he covets the

possessions of others.

12. Unsuccessful in maintaining his family, bereft of wealth, and with all his e orts in vain, the poor unfortunate fellow sighs as he

broods on his situation, his intelligence bewildered.

13. Because he is unable to support his family, his wife and other

dependents cease to o er him the respect they had previously, just

like a farmer does to a worn-out bull.

14. Even then in this situation detachment does not awaken in him.

Deformed due to the onset of old age, and himself now maintained

by his own dependents, he faces death in his own home.

15. He lives neglected like this, his digestion weak, eating little, and with limited energy, eating whatever is placed before him

contemptuously like a dog.

16. His eyes dilate from the air owing up, and his windpipe is blocked by mucus. His breathing becomes asthmatic and he makes a

rasping sound in his throat.

17. Lying on his bed surrounded by his relatives who are grieving,

he cannot reply when addressed by them, as he has succumbed to

the control of the noose of death.

18. In this way, a person whose senses were uncontrolled, and who

had been absorbed in family responsibility, dies, his mind

overwhelmed by great pain, while his relatives weep.

19. At that moment, two agents of Yama, Lord of death, arrive. They

are terrifying, with ferocious eyes. Upon seeing them, his heart is petri ed, and he releases stool and urine.

20. They enclose him in a body suitable for in icting su ering, and

bind his neck forcibly with nooses. Then they lead him down a long

road, just like the king's soldiers lead a criminal for punishment.

21. Overwhelmed by trembling due to their threats, his heart is terri ed by those two, and he is savaged by dogs along the path.

Overwrought, he remembers his own past sins.

22. A icted by hunger and thirst on that path of burning sand, and

without water or shelter, he is scorched by the sun, forest

con agrations, and wind. He is lashed severely on his back with a whip as he walks, even though he is barely capable of doing so.

23. Fainting and collapsing periodically out of exhaustion, he gets up on his feet again and again, and is led forcibly along that awful road to the abode of Yama, Lord of death.

24. He is dragged along this road, ninety-nine thousand yojanas[116] long, in two or three hours, and receives his punishments.

25. His limbs are burned after piling rebrands around them. Then his body is devoured—and this is performed sometimes by his own self, sometimes by others.

26. In the abode of Yama, his entrails are pulled out by dogs and vultures while he is still alive, and his body is punctured by the bites of snakes and scorpions.

27. His limbs are torn o one by one, and he is trampled by elephants. He is thrown o the peaks of mountains, and he is enclosed in caves lled with water.

28. Whether man or woman, he experiences the punishments of the hellish realms of Tāmisra, Andhatāmisra, and Raurava, [117] merited due to their mutual sexual indulgences.

29. Even here on earth, dear mother, heaven and hell are perceived; hellish punishments are visible here, too.

30. In this manner, one who only maintains his family or lls his own belly in this world, after leaving these behind and going to the

next world, experiences the appropriate fruits of his actions.

31. He alone is the one who attains darkness after giving up this physical body, which he had maintained by means of enmity to

other beings. His own inauspicious deeds are his only provisions for

the journey.

32. In hell, a person experiences his karmic reactions for maintaining his family, which accrue to him by destiny, just like a

person who becomes a icted upon losing his wealth.

33. A soul eager to maintain his family solely through unrighteous means (adharma) goes to the hell called Andhatāmisra, the deepest destination in tamas.

34. From the lower hellish realms, after experiencing the

appropriate number of punishments in due order, he can then return

again to this realm, puri ed."

Book III, Chapter 31

1. Śrī Bhagavān said: "A person, encased in a drop of semen, attains the womb of a woman and enters the fetus of an o spring in

accordance with his or her karma under the direction of Providence.

2. After the rst night, he reaches the embryonic stage; after ve nights, a bubble; in ten days, the size of a jujube berry; and after

that he becomes esh or an egg.

3. Within a month, a head is formed; within two months, the forms

of arms, feet, and other organs; and within three months, the

appearance of nails, hair, bones, skin, genitals, and bodily apertures.

4. By four months the seven dhātus 118 are formed; within ve, hunger and thirst arise. By the fth month, he moves to the right

side of the womb, impelled by the outer skin membrane.

5. The dhātus increase by the mother's imbibing of food and drink, etc. He lies in a disagreeable enclosure with stool and urine, a breeding ground of microorganisms.

6. He is bitten all over his body every moment by organisms, and,

experiencing great pain because of his softness, he swoons. And he

is frequently a icted by hunger.

7. He is a ected by the mother's eating of food that is excessively

bitter, spicy, hot, salty, dry, or sour, etc., and pain spreads through

all his limbs.

8. Enveloped in the embryo within, and in the intestines beyond that, he lies there, his head pushed toward his stomach, and his neck and back bent.

9. Unable to move his limbs, he is like a bird in a cage. In that situation, by the grace of Providence, he regains his memory of the

past hundred births. Remembering these for a long time, he sighs.

What happiness can he attain in such a state?

10. After attaining the seventh month, he gains consciousness. He is

shaken by the winds of birth and cannot remain in one place, like

the other organisms sharing the womb.

11. The wise soul, embedded within the seven layers [of the dhātus], frightened and seeking help with prayers, folds his hands in

supplication and invokes with faltering words the one who has

placed him in the womb:

12. The living entity says:

‘I seek shelter in the One who banishes fear, who adopts various bodily incarnations, whose lotus feet wander on the earth out of a

desire to protect it and who is worshipped by it. It is due to Him

that I have attained this condition, which is be tting me, as I am unworthy and unrighteous.

13. This ātman appears bound here, enveloped by its karma. It has entered a state of māyā, consisting of the bodily elements, senses, and mind. I o er homage to Him who dwells within my su ering

heart. He is pure, unchanging, and of absolute knowledge.

14. The ātman exists as a distinct entity in this body made of the ve elements. I have been covered by Him, but I, the ātman, am not the senses, guṇas, sense objects, or mind. I o er homage to that sage Supreme Being who is beyond prakṛti and puruṣa. His greatness has no bounds.

15. Because of His māyā, I am wandering on this path of saṁsāra, bound by my karma and these formidable guṇas. Because of this, my

[spiritual] memory is lost out of exhaustion. By what means can I

discover again that abode [the ātman] without the blessings of the great saints?

16. Which other Lord can bestow such knowledge of the past,

present, and future? We, who follow the path of karma for the jīvas, worship him for the cessation of the threefold miseries. 119 By his partial incarnation,120 he pervades all moving and non-moving beings.

17. The embodied ātman has fallen into this pit of stool, urine, and blood, in an enclosure that is inside the body of someone else.

Desiring to escape while counting the remaining months, his body is scorched by gastric re. When will this pitiful-minded one be released, O Bhagavān?

18. The ātman has been constrained in this situation for ten months by the great kindness of your Lordship, O God. He, the Master of the fallen, should be pleased by His own actions. What else can one do other than to o er Him homage with folded hands?

19. In a body capable of sense control, this jīva in the body enveloped by the seven dhātus perceives according to intelligence; others [in nonhuman forms] perceive according to the abilities of their bodies. I perceive that primordial supreme Being revealed both inside and outside, just like the individual soul is revealed.

20. Although I am living in a dwelling place of extreme su ering, O Lord, I do not wish to leave the womb to go into the blind well of the outside world. One who emerges out there encounters the Lord's māyā, attains a bewildered intelligence, and enters the cycle of saṁsāra.

21. Therefore, free of all concerns, I will quickly extricate myself from tamas with the help of my mind which has been devoted to the lotus feet of Viṣṇu, and so has become my friend. By this means, I hope I will never again enter this condition of being in a body with its various outlets.'"121

22. Kapila said:

"Having attained wisdom in this way while o ering worship, the

wise entity of ten months is suddenly propelled downward by the birth airs for delivery.

23. Propelled by that wind, his head is turned downward suddenly

and painfully, and he emerges with di culty, breathless. But his memory becomes erased.

24. Fallen on the ground mixed with blood, he struggles like a worm

in excrement, and wails loudly. His knowledge is gone, and he has

ended up in the opposite situation [to that for which he had aspired

in the womb].

25. He is o ered nourishment by people who cannot understand his

actual desires, and so when he is o ered some unwanted thing, he

has no power to refuse it.

26. Lying on a soiled bed, the newborn child is troubled by insects.

He is not able to scratch his own limbs, nor sit, stand up, or move.

27. Mosquitoes, bugs, and gnats bite his soft skin as he wails, deprived of the wisdom he had gained, just like worms bite smaller

worms.

28. After experiencing the frustrations of infancy and childhood in

this way, he later becomes angry out of ignorance, as his desires are

unful lled. He then becomes immersed in lamentation.

29. His frustration and pride grow as his body grows, and, full of

desires, he creates enmity with other lusty people, and brings about

his own destruction.

30. Lacking knowledge, the foolish embodied being dwelling in this

body made of the ve elements, is constantly absorbed in the

illusion of 'I' and 'mine.'

31. He performs activities for the sake of his body, but, bound by

the reactions of those acts, he ends up perpetuating saṁsāra. Bound

by those actions that were performed in ignorance, another body follows him, also causing su ering.

32. If, on the path of saṁsāra, the person again follows unrighteous people whose energy is devoted to satisfying the stomach and

genitals, and he or she enjoys in this way, that person once again

enters a state of tamas, just as before.

33. From such association, truthfulness, cleanliness, compassion,

gravity, intelligence, wealth, modesty, fame, forgiveness, tolerance,

self-control, and good fortune become destroyed.

34. One should not associate with such agitated unrighteous

ignorant people, who have destroyed their ātman. They are like pet deer under the control of women, and pitiable.

35. There is no other bewilderment, entrapment, or other type of attachment as powerful as the attachment to a woman or those

attached to women.

36. Brahmā (Prajāpati), after seeing his own daughter, became overpowered by her beauty. When she assumed the form of a doe,

he shamelessly pursued her in the form of a stag.

37. Among created beings, and beings created by them, and by

those created by the latter in turn, what person is there in existence

who does not have his mind disturbed by māyā in the form of a woman—other than the sage Nārāyaṇa?

38. Just see the power of My māyā in the form of a woman: just by the movements of her eyebrows, she makes the conquerors of all the

quarters follow at her heels!

39. One who desires to attain the nal goal of yoga, who seeks the ātman, and who has attained the Supreme by service to Me, should never associate with women. The sages say she is the doorway to hell for such aspirants.

40. Māyā, created by the gods in the shape of a woman, approaches enticingly. You should regard her as your death, like a well, covered

over by grass.

41. Similarly, out of illusion, a woman thinks of a man as her husband, thinking of him as the provider of wealth, children, and homestead, but he is actually also My māyā. She attained the state of being a woman due to attachment to women [in a past life as a man].

42. A woman should likewise perceive a man as her death in the form of husband, children, and household sent to her by Fate, just

like the singing [of the hunter is death] to a deer.

43. While a person wanders from realm to realm in the subtle body

enjoying, he or she performs actions continually.

44. The subtle body follows the ātman. The gross body is made of the gross elements and the senses: when it is overwhelmed, death

takes place, when it is manifest, birth. 122

45. Death is when the body, the location from which objects are experienced, becomes incapable of perceiving objects, and birth is when the perception of objects arise from a sense of 'I-ness.'

46. This is just as when the eyes lose their ability to perceive the

parts of an object, the power of sight does so, too, and so the seer

(ātman) becomes incapable of engaging in the function of perception by means of either.

47. Because of all this, a wise person should not be miserly, bewildered, or fearful of life. After understanding the nature of the

jīva, one should go about in this world free of attachments.

48. Situated in this body, one should go about in this world created

by māyā, endowed with full insight, intelligence, and detachment gained from the practice of yoga."

Book III, Chapter 32

22. Therefore, with all your heart, worship the Supreme with

devotion because of His qualities. His lotus feet are worthy of worship.

23. Bhakti yoga directed to Bhagavān, Vāsudeva, quickly produces detachment (vairāgya). The knowledge ensuing from this causes the direct perception of Brahman.

24. The mind of such a person does not perceive di erences in the

form of pleasant and unpleasant caused by the agitation of the senses toward sense objects. Sense objects are in fact, neutral

[neither pleasant nor unpleasant], in and of themselves.

25. In this state, one becomes free of attachments, and one's

perception become equanimous. One thus perceives the ātman by means of the ātman.123 At this stage, one has transcended all notions of acceptance and rejection, and attained the supreme destination.

26. The being Īśvara is the Supreme Ātman (Paramātman), pure consciousness. Although Bhagavān is one, He is approached di erently according to di erent perceptions and states of mind.

27. Therefore, complete detachment is the cherished goal that is to

be attained by a yogī through any and all of the processes of yoga.

28. Brahman is consciousness. It is unitary and transcendent to the senses. Due to illusion, it appears through the outward owing

senses in forms other than its own and hence it appears as being endowed with qualities of sound, etc. (i.e., the material world).

29. Just as the mahat appears as the ahaṅkāra (cosmic ego) in its three expressions [sattva, rajas, and tamas] and as the ve [gross elements] and also the eleven divisions [mind and ten working and perceiving senses], so the jīva has the universe as its body. 124

30. The controlled mind, free of attachment, can perceive Truth by

means of constant faith, bhakti, yoga practice, and detachment.

31. So that knowledge leading to the perception of Brahman has been explained to you, dear mother! Through this knowledge, one

can understand the Truths of prakṛti and puruṣa.

32. Jñāna yoga is transcendent to the guṇas, while yoga is characterized by bhakti devoted to Me. Although two, their goal is actually one: He who is known by the word Bhagavān.

33. Just as one object containing many qualities is perceived variously by the di erent senses, so, in the same way, Bhagavān although one, is perceived variously by the di erent paths outlined

in the scriptures.

34.–36. By work, sacri ces, charity, austerity, study, and

deliberation; by the control of the mind and senses; by the

renunciation of deeds performed out of desire; by the practice of yoga with its various limbs—and of course especially bhakti yoga—

by the performance of dharma characterized by both desire for the fruits of actions and disinterest in the fruits; by insight into the Truth of the ātman; and by rm detachment, by all these means, the self-manifest Bhagavān is perceived variously either with qualities or without (saguṇa or nirguṇa) [depending on the means chosen].

37. I have spoken to you about the four types of bhakti [in each of the three guṇas as well as that transcendent to the guṇas, nirguṇa]. I have also spoken to you about Time, the ways of which are

unknown, and which lies concealed among living beings.

38. There are many forms of saṁsāra for the jīvas all created by ignorance and actions. Entering into these, O mother, the ātman cannot even understand its own situation.

39. These teachings should never be imparted to rascals, the ill-mannered, fools, transgressors, or those who make a show of

religion.

40. It should not be taught to those who are avaricious, nor to those

whose minds are attached to their households, nor to non-devotees,

and certainly not to those who despise My bhaktas.

41.–42. It should be imparted to the faithful, the bhaktas, the cultured, those who are not envious, those who have developed

friendship for all living entities, those who are dedicated to serving,

those who are detached from external things, those whose minds are

peaceful, those who are humble, those who are free of ego, those

who are pure, and those for whom I am the most precious of precious things.

43. A person who hears this with faith, O mother, and who imparts

it with mind xed on Me, attains My abode immediately.

Book III, Chapter 33

1. After hearing all these words from Kapila, His mother, Devahūti,

beloved of Kardama, had the veil of ignorance dispelled. She

honored Kapila, the founder of the perfect knowledge characterized

by the subject matter of the evolutes from prakṛti (tattvas), and pleased Him.

2. Devahūti said: “Only the unborn Brahmā himself, who was born

from the lotus growing from Your stomach, could meditate on Your

form, lying in the cosmic waters. It is composed of the elements, senses, and sense objects, contains the ow of the guṇas, and is the seed for all reality.

3. Your Lordship brings about the creation, maintenance, and

destruction of this universe by means of Your own power, which is

divided by the ow of the guṇas, even though You Yourself have no desires to ful ll. You are the Īśvara of the ātman, with unlimited powers, and Your will is infallible. You are beyond human

comprehension.

4. How is it possible, O Lord, that He in whose stomach this entire

universe is situated was born from my womb? He lies alone as a baby on a banyan leaf at the end of the cosmic age (yuga) sucking His big toe! 125

5. The purpose of Your assuming a body is to quell the sinful and

bestow prosperity on those who follow Your directions. Just as was

the case with Your other avatāras such as the boar, 126 so too now You have come to reveal the knowledge of the ātman.

6. By hearing and chanting the sacred names, bowing to Him or even just remembering Him occasionally, even a dog-eater

immediately becomes quali ed to perform the Vedic ritual of pressing the soma juice,127 not to mention seeing You, O Bhagavān!

7. Aho! My son, even one who cooks dogs becomes honorable if he takes Your name on the tip of his tongue! Those who recite Your name have thereby become Āryas, performed austerities, undertaken Vedic rites, taken sacred bath, and studied the Vedas.

8. I o er my respects to You, Kapila. You are Bhagavān. You are Viṣṇu, the Supreme Person, Brahman, the source of the Vedas. You can be understood by the mind which has reversed the ow of the

senses [from outward to inward]. The ow of the guṇas is destroyed by Your potency."

9. Maitreya said:

“The Supreme Person, Bhagavān, under the name of Kapila, was adored by His mother. Honored in this way, He then spoke to her as

follows, with a choked-up voice:

10. Kapila said:

‘This path which I have explained to you, O mother, is very easily performed. By following it, you will quickly attain the highest goal.

11. Have faith in these teachings of Mine; they are relished by the knowers of Brahman. By following them, you will attain fearlessness. Those who do not know them attain rebirth.’”

12. Maitreya said:

“After Kapila had revealed the path to the ātman to that pious lady, He took leave from her, His mother, who had come to realize

Brahman, and set forth.

13. Then Kuntī became xed in yoga through the instructions on yoga that had been spoken by her son. There, in that āśrama, the crown of the Sarasvatī river, she concentrated her mind.

14. Her curly locks of hair became matted and tawny from repeated

bathing. Her body became emaciated from severe austerities, and

she wore the bark garments of the ascetics.

15. Her household had been materialized by the yoga austerity of her husband, Prajāpati Kardama. It was incomparable and envied even by the denizens of the celestial realms.

16. It had couches of ivory resembling the foam of milk gilded in

gold, and golden seats with the softest covers.

17. Jeweled lamps shone on pure crystal walls with huge emeralds,

and the women were decorated with gems.

18. The gardens of the house were beauti ed with owers and

celestial trees, and replete with the warbling of pairs of birds, and

the humming of intoxicated black bees.

19. The celestials used to sing when Devahūti, caressed by Kardama,

entered the pond, fragrant with lotuses.

20. But she was downcast in appearance, desolate due to separation

from her son. Then, she renounced this most desirable location, which was envied even by Indra's lady folk.

21. Her husband had already departed for the forest, and now

Devahūti became desolate due to separation from her son. Although

she had realized the truth of Sāṅkhya, she was a ectionate toward

Him, like a cow on the loss of her calf.

22. Meditating on her son, Lord Kapila, who is Hari, she quickly became detached from such a residence, O son.

23. As her son had instructed, she meditated on the form of

Bhagavān with its smiling face as the object of meditation through concentrating on both the entirety of the form and also limb by limb.

24.–25. By means of the force of bhakti yoga, by powerful renunciation, by knowledge born from the adherence to the

appropriate vows, which is the cause of [knowing] Brahman, Devahūti saw the all-pervading Supreme Truth in her puri ed mind,

through direct personal realization. The dualities caused by māyā

and the guṇas then disappeared.

26. Her mind became xed on Brahman, who is Bhagavān, the refuge of the ātman. Once her impurities had been puri ed, she attained bliss and her embodied condition as a jīva drew to an end.

27. Because of her constant immersion in the state of samādhi, all bewilderment caused by the guṇas was dispelled. Then she forgot about her

body, just as, upon arising, one forgets whatever was seen

in one's dream.

28. She was covered with grime, like a re covered with smoke. But,

since she was free of all cares, her body was nourished by others,

and did not become emaciated.

29. Her mind was completely absorbed in Vāsudeva, and so she was

no longer aware of her own body, which was dedicated to austerity

and yoga. Her clothes had fallen o and her hair was in disarray, but her body was now protected by Providence.

30. In this manner, Devahūti followed the path taught by Kapila and

attained [the stage known variously as] nirvāṇa, ātman, Brahman, and Bhagavān.

31. O hero Vidūra! That place where she attained perfection became

a most sacred place. It became celebrated throughout the three

worlds under the name of Siddhapada ('the Place of Perfection').

32. Her mortal body, puri ed by such practice of yoga, became a river, O gentle Vidūra. It became a preeminent river, worshipped by

perfected beings, as it bestowed perfection.

33. The great yogī Bhagavān Kapila then took permission from His mother and also departed from His father's āśrama. He set forth for the northeast.

34. Honored by the celestial siddhas, cāraṇas, gandharvas, apsaras, and sages, He was provided a dwelling place as an o ering by the

personi ed ocean.

35. He remains there, revered by the Sāṅkhya masters, xed in the

practice of yoga, absorbed in meditation for the peace of the three worlds.

36. O sinless Vidūra! I have recounted to you whatever you asked of

me about the pure discussion between Kapila and Devahūti.

37. Whoever hears this esoteric teaching of yoga imparted by sage Kapila, with mind xed on Bhagavān, whose emblem is Garuḍa, 128

will attain the lotus feet of Bhagavān."

Book IV

The Tale of Prince Dhruva:1 The Five-Year-Old Yogī Prodigy

Yoga Blueprint *Prince Dhruva's story illustrates a number of important devotional themes.*

First, as the Gītā informs us (IX.30–32), there are no gender, caste, class, background, or age disquali cations in the ability to attain success in bhakti : Dhruva was a mere ve-year-old child.

But he exhibited an unstoppable determination and undeviating focus, which are requisites for success in yoga . Where Dhruva's tale departs from many of the other stories in the Bhāgavata is that his initial motive in his yogic practice was purely materialistic—the "mixed bhakti"

discussed in "Bhakti Mixed with Attachment to Dharma and Jñāna." However, because he was fortunate enough to x his mind on Viṣṇu in his quest for realizing his ambition, Dhruva's mind was puri ed of all desires, and he nonetheless attained a divine vision by the grace of Viṣṇu. That Īśvara can award liberation on the yogī who selects Him as a devotional object of meditation is a theme stressed ubiquitously in all devotional traditions, 2 irrespective, in some cases, of one's initial motivations for undertaking such meditation.

Dhruva's story also touches on a number of other important themes in yoga : the need for a guru to oversee one's yogic practice is illustrated by the appearance of the famous sage Nārada in the story (see " Satsaṅga and the Guru "). Nārada imparts the mantra to the child and provides him with further instructions on the speci cs of practice. Sacred sound as mantra has been foundational to Hinduism from its earliest Vedic origins to the present day. In the devotional traditions, God manifests in the form of sound, that is, the names of Viṣṇu are nondi erent from Viṣṇu in person. Fixing the mind on the mantra, then, not only provides a support upon which the mind can rest in meditative states, but a ords the mind an opportunity to bathe in the actual and immediate presence of God in sonic form. As was the case with Dhruva, the mind thereby becomes puri ed of all impurities.

Another means by which divinity can manifest in the physical world,

prakṛti , is through a deity made of some form of matter—usually stone or metal. This is perhaps the most dominant and ubiquitously visible expression of Hinduism, which, for most Hindus, involves some sort of relationship with a temple and its deities. As discussed in " Arcana (Worship)," this is not considered a limitation of God's omnipresence— on the contrary, denying God the ability to manifest in such forms would be a limitation of God's omnipotency (nor is God depleted or minimized thereby, as He personally can manifest in unlimited forms and still maintain a separate presence). Nārada instructs Dhruva to make such a form and worship it according to time and place. The Dhruva story thus exempli es ve distinct experiences of the divine presence: initially in the form of his guru , then through the mantra and the deity, and nally through direct perception, rst as an internal vision, then as an external one. Dhruva's story thus illustrates various forms of divine epiphany.

Other than this, the Dhruva story illustrates the practice of saṁyama (Yoga Sūtras III.4 .). By concentrating with the utmost intensity upon an object the mind becomes one with that object and manifests the qualities of that object —a mystic power touched upon in the anubhūti chapter of the Yoga Sūtras (see III.23, 24). Since Dhruva had xed his mind on Viṣṇu, who can be seen as having the universe as His body, he became as if one with the universe. Therefore, Dhruva's bodily state of breath restraint was felt by all creatures

in the universe owing to this merging of micro and macro realities by intense mental absorption. As the Yoga Sūtras makes clear, however, mystic powers are considered attainments only by those still unenlightened as to the true nature of the self owing to the in uence of ignorance. Dhruva's embarrassment at his foolish initial motives are poignant instructions for those approaching yoga with material goals in mind.

Book IV, Chapter 8

8. Sunīti and Suruci were the two wives of King Uttānapāda. Suruci

was dearer to her husband than his other wife, Sunīti, who was the

mother of Dhruva.

9. Once, the king lifted Uttama, the son of Suruci, onto his lap, caressing him. But he did not welcome Dhruva, who also wished to

climb up.

10. As Dhruva, the son of her co-wife, was trying to do this, the arrogant Suruci enviously said as follows in the hearing of the king:

11. "Dear child, you should not try to climb up on the lap of your

father, because, although you are the son of the king, you were not

conceived by me in my womb.

12. You are only a child, but nonetheless you should now know that

unfortunately you were born from the womb of another woman, not

from me. Therefore, you cannot ful ll your wish.

13. If you desire the throne of the king, worship God, the Supreme

Being, and attain my womb [in your next life] by His grace."

14. Maitreya said:

“Dhruva’s father looked on without saying a word. Pierced by the

harsh words of his stepmother, Dhruva went weeping to his own

mother, breathing with anger, like a snake struck by a stick.

15. Sunīti lifted the boy onto her lap. His upper and lower lips were

trembling, and he was short of breath. After hearing [what had happened] at length from the mouths of the other residents of the

palace, she became agitated at what had been said by her co-wife.

16. Losing her composure, the woman, her face beautiful as a lotus,

lamented with the burning re of grief, like twine in a re. Thinking

of the words spoken by her co-wife, his mother spoke, her words choked up with tears.

17. Breathing heavily, the woman, who was unable to see the means of overcoming this intrigue, said: ‘Do not wish harm on others, O

son. A person who in icts harm on others himself experiences the

same.

18. Suruci spoke the truth: I am an unfortunate woman and you were born in my womb, and reared on my breast. The king, Lord of

the earth, is ashamed to keep me, or even think of me as his wife.

19. Accept without hostility whatever your stepmother told you, my

son, since it is the truth. If you wish to take a seat like Uttama [on

your father's throne], then you should worship the lotus feet of the

lotus-eyed Lord [Viṣṇu].

20. It is Viṣṇu who controls the guṇas for the purpose of maintaining the universe. Indeed, Brahmā himself, the unborn one, worshipped

His feet. As a result of this, Brahmā assumed the supreme post [in

the universe] which is honored by the yogīs who have controlled their mind through breath restraints.

21. Likewise, the most honorable Manu, your own grandfather,

worshipped Viṣṇu with concentrated mind through abundant

sacri ces and charity. He consequently gained worldly and celestial

happiness, followed by liberation, which is di cult to attain by other means.

22. Take shelter of Viṣṇu, child: He is a ectionate to His devotees.

His lotus feet are the path [of liberation] sought for by those desiring liberation. Firm in the performance of your personal duty

(dharma), x that Supreme Person in your mind and devote yourself to Him exclusively.

23. I cannot nd anyone else to remove your frustration other than

Lord Viṣṇu with the lotus-petal eyes. Other people seek the Goddess

of Fortune, who holds a lotus in her hand, but She herself seeks Him.'"

24. Maitreya said:

"These words spoken by his mother were intended for his welfare.

After hearing them, Dhruva controlled his mind with the mind, 3 and set out from his father's city.

25. The sage Nārada overheard all this, and understood Dhruva's intentions. Astonished, he touched Dhruva on the head with his

hand, which can remove all sins, and spoke: 26. ' Aho! Just see the potency of the warrior caste (kṣatriyas)—they cannot bear a slight on their pride! Even though this one is a mere child, he has taken

the unjust words of his stepmother to heart.'

27. Nārada said: 'My son: I still cannot fathom how notions of honor

and dishonor can exist in a young boy like you who is attached to

playful games and such things.

28. Even if the distinction [between honor and dishonor] has

already made its presence felt in your life, there is no cause for anyone to be frustrated, other than because of ignorance. People have di erent lots in life according to their personal karma.

29. Therefore an intelligent person should be satis ed with just whatever has been bestowed by Providence, O child. One should

understand this as the way to reach Īśvara.

30. You now wish to gain His favor by following the yoga instructed by your mother. In my opinion, God is de nitely not solicited easily

by people.

31. Even sages do not nd the path that leads to Him, despite searching for many births free from attachments through intense

yoga practices and states of samādhi.

32. Therefore you had better give up this useless endeavor of yours. You can attempt it later, when a better occasion presents itself.

33. An embodied being, who is self-content in whatever situation of happiness and distress has been ordained by destiny, attains the state beyond darkness (tamas).

34. If one is overwhelmed with happiness for someone with higher qualities and sympathy toward one with lower qualities, and seeks friendship with one with equal qualities, one is never overcome by di culties.'[4]

35. Dhruva replied:

‘This equilibrium of mind5 that you have taught out of compassion for people who are a icted by happiness and distress, good sir, is

di cult to realize for the likes of me.

36. I am an uncouth soul and have inherited a erce warrior nature.

Therefore [your instruction] does not take root in my heart, which

was pierced by the arrows of Suruci’s harsh words.

37. I desire to attain a domain that is the highest in the three worlds, one that has not been ruled over even by our grandfathers,

nor by anyone else.6 Please instruct me about the right path to achieve this goal, O brāhmaṇa!

38. Indeed, you, sir, are the son of Lord Brahmā, highest of the celestial beings. Like the sun, you travel about for the welfare of the

universe, plucking your vīṇā instrument.’”7

39. Maitreya said:

“When he heard this response, the honorable sage Nārada was

impressed. He replied to the boy kindly, with words of truth.

40. Nārada said: ‘The path of Lord Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] taught by your

mother will lead you to the ultimate goal. Worship Vāsudeva with

your soul dedicated to Him.

41. For one who desires the best for oneself—namely, righteous duty, prosperity, ful llment of desire, and liberation [the four goals

of life]8—there is only one source for these: service to the feet of Hari [Kṛṣṇa].

42. I wish you good fortune in this, my son. Go to Madhu forest, a

holy place on the banks of the Yamunā river. The presence of Hari is always in that place.

43. After bathing there constantly in the auspicious waters of the Kālindī (Yamunā) river, and performing the rites appropriate for you

[given your age], dedicate your time there on a suitable seat, āsana

[for practicing yoga].

44. First, cast o , gradually, the impurities of the mind, senses, and

life airs (prāṇa) by means of the three forms of breath control (prāṇāyāma),9 then you should meditate on Viṣṇu, the [Supreme]

guru with a xed mind. 10

45. He is always mercifully inclined, and His eyes and face are always benevolent. His nose and eyebrows are gorgeous, and His

cheeks are delightful. He far surpasses the celestials in beauty.

46. He is youthful and His limbs are attractive. His eyes and lower

lip are reddish in color. He is the refuge of His devotees, and the worthy shelter for all humanity. He is an ocean of mercy.

47. He is a personal Being. His color is dark blue, He wears a garland of forest owers, and He is characterized by the śrīvatsa tuft of hair. 11 He has four arms, each one distinct [in holding] a conch, discus, club, and lotus, respectively.

48. He wears earrings and an ornate headdress, and is endowed

with armlets and bracelets. His neck is adorned with the kaustubha

gem, and He wears a yellow silk garment.

49. Girded with a belt of bells, and wearing shining golden anklets,

He is the most beautiful sight of everything that is worth beholding.

He is peaceful, and enlivening to the eyes and the mind.

50. One should worship His feet, resplendent with the brilliance of His ruby-like toenails. He is situated in the ātman. His seat is the pericarp of the lotus in the heart. 12

51. He is the ultimate bestower of boons. With concentrated mind,

one should constantly contemplate Him smiling and casting

a ectionate glances.

52. When the mind is meditating on the auspicious form of the Lord

in this way, it is quickly immersed in supreme bliss and never ceases

to be so.

53. Now hear the highest and most intimate sacred sound recitation,

japa.13 A person reciting this aloud for seven nights will be able to see the mystic beings who travel through the air,14 O prince: 54.

“Oṁ namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya.” [Reciting] this mantra, one who is wise and understands how to adjust to context, should make a

physical form (deity) of the Lord and worship it with various

paraphernalia according to time and place. 15

55. One should worship the Lord with pure water, garlands of forest

owers, roots, and fruits, etc., freshly cut sprouts and stems, and with the tulasī plant, which is dear to the Lord. 16

56. Alternatively, the sage, who is peaceful, whose mind is xed and

speech controlled, and who subsists by frugally eating the produce

of the forest, can worship a physical form of the Lord made from

earth or water, etc.17

57. By means of His inconceivable personal powers, the Lord

(Uttamaśloka 18) will perform deeds in the form of the pure activities of His incarnations. One should contemplate those deeds.

58. These acts of worship to God were practiced by the ancients to

the best of their abilities. One should concentrate on the Lord by

[chanting] the mantra in the heart . The Lord manifests in the form of the mantra.

59.–60. The Lord increases the loving feelings [of his devotees].

Being worshipped in this way by devotional acts of worship through

body, mind, and words by people worshipping free from guile, He bestows welfare such as dharma, etc., 19 to the living entities, according to their desires.

61. Detached from the pleasures of the senses by means of

practicing bhakti yoga with great seriousness and with mind always absorbed in the Lord, one should worship in this way in order to attain liberation.'

62. Addressed in this way, the prince o ered obeisances to Nārada

and circumambulated him. 20 Then he entered the holy Madhu forest, which is imprinted by the footprints of Hari.

63. As Dhruva was entering the forest to perform penance, Nārada

entered the king's inner palace. He was welcomed with due respect

by the king, and after he was comfortably seated the sage addressed

him.

64. Nārada said: 'O king, why are you pining with a withered face?

Is there something lacking in your pursuit of righteousness,

grati cation, and material well-being?'21

65. The king replied:

‘O wise Nārada, my son, a boy of ve years, along with his mother,

has been banished by me. I am a cruel soul who is under the control

of a woman, O great sage.

66. O brāhmaṇa, he is without a guardian: may the wolves not have devoured the boy, his lotus face faded, while he was resting, or sleeping.

67. Oh, woe is me! You should consider me to be a cruel-hearted person. I did not welcome Dhruva, who was desiring to climb up onto my lap out of love. I am the lowest of rascals.’

68. Nārada said: ‘Don’t worry, don’t worry! Your son is protected by

the gods, O Lord of men. You are unaware of his power: his fame

will spread all over the world.

69. He will perform an exceedingly di cult deed even for kings to

perform, O master. He will return after a short period of time, O

king, and spread your fame far and wide.’”

70. Maitreya said:

“After hearing these words spoken by the celestial sage, the king, Lord of the Earth, ceased paying any attention to the fortunes of the

kingdom, and immersed his mind solely in thoughts of his son.

71. Meanwhile, in the forest, Dhruva took a bath, and fasted that night attentively. Then he worshipped the Supreme Being devotedly,

according to the instructions of the sage.

72. He passed one month worshipping Hari while eating only wood

apple and jujube fruits after every three nights and then only as much as was needed to sustain himself.

73. Then, for the second month, as he worshipped the Lord, the boy

took for his food withered leaves and grass once every six days.

74. The boy spent the third month with his mind xed in unbroken

concentration (samādhi), on the Lord, who is praised in the best of verses, while consuming water only every nine days.

75. He underwent the fourth month meditating on the Lord with his

breath under control while subsisting only on air inhaled once every

twelve days.

76. When the fth month arrived, the son of the king stood on one

foot as immobile as a pillar while meditating on Brahman, with his breath controlled.

77. He withdrew his mind, which is the support of the senses and

sense objects, from all objects, and, meditating on the form of Bhagavān in his heart, gave up awareness of anything else.

78. Because Dhruva was concentrating on Īśvara, the primeval Lord, Brahman, who is the support of the entire material manifestation, the three worlds began to tremble.

79. When the boy prince stood on one leg, the earth, being pressed

by his toe, inclined on one side, just as a boat, mounted by a tusker

elephant, lurches to the left and right at each of its steps.

80. By dint of his undeviating concentration on the Soul of the Universe, Dhruva blocked the pathways of air in the universe as he

was meditating. 22 At this, the [denizens of the] other realms, along with their rulers, feeling greatly a icted on account of their own breathing being blocked, approached Hari for help.

81. The celestials said:

‘O Lord, we do not understand the cause of this suppression of air,

which is a ecting the condition of all beings, moving and non-moving. Therefore please free us from this distress. We have

approached You for shelter, since You can bestow shelter.’

82. The Lord, Śrī Bhagavān, said: ‘Do not fear! I will restrain the boy from his extreme austerities. Return to your abodes. The son of king

Uttānapāda has absorbed himself in Me. It is because of this that your breath has been choked!’”

Book IV, Chapter 9

1. Maitreya said:

“Their fear dispelled by these words, the gods o ered their respects

to Lord Viṣṇu (Urukrama23) and set out to their abodes throughout the three worlds. Then, Viṣṇu (the thousand-headed One24) also

went to Madhuvan (the sweet forest) on Garuḍa, His eagle carrier, 25

with the desire of seeing His servant Dhruva.

2. Viṣṇu, on account of the intensity of Dhruva’s mature yoga practice, appeared in the lotus of Dhruva’s heart, e ulgent as

lightning. Dhruva beheld Him. Then Viṣṇu suddenly disappeared.

[Opening his eyes] Dhruva saw Him standing outside in the same position.

3. Seeing that vision, Dhruva was thrown into confusion. He

prostrated his body on the ground like a stick26 and o ered obeisance. Beholding Lord Viṣṇu, the boy was as if drinking Him with his eyes, kissing Him with his mouth, and embracing Him with

his arms.

4. Hari is situated in Dhruva’s heart—as well as in everything—and

understood that Dhruva, who was standing with hands folded in

supplication, was intensely desiring to speak, but did not know how

to do so. Out of compassion, He touched the boy on the cheek with

his conch shell, made of Brahman. 27

5. At this, Dhruva understood the will of the Supreme Being, whose

glories are widespread. Absorbed in devotional feelings, he slowly o ered to the Lord in praise the divine words that had been

bestowed upon him with which to do so. Dhruva's [future] abode,

the polestar, would remain permanent28 [see IV.9.19–20 below].

6. Dhruva said:

‘You, the possessor of all power, have entered within me and, with

Your own power, have animated these words of mine from their

state of dormancy, as well as my other [faculties]—hands, feet, ears,

skin, etc.—and my life airs, too. Obeisance to You, Bhagavān, the Supreme Being.

7. O Bhagavān, You are the one Supreme Person. Through Your personal powers, You create all the primordial material ingredients

of this world, which consists of the vast guṇas and is known as māyā. 29 You then enter the ever-changing guṇas and illuminate them, like re lighting up an assortment of wood.

8. Lord Brahmā was completely surrendered to You, O Lord, and so

perceived the universe by means of the wisdom bestowed by You,

like a person awakening from sleep. 30 Your lotus feet were the refuge for Brahmā when he was seeking liberation—what learned

person would forget them? You are the friend of the downtrodden.

9. You are a wish-ful lling tree.31 You bestow birth, death, and liberation. Certainly those who desire the grati cation of this body,

which is like a corpse, and worship You for other things [apart from

liberation] are people whose intelligence has been stolen by Your illusory power (māyā). Such sense pleasure is available even for people in hell.

10. The pleasure [experienced] by embodied beings from meditating

on Your lotus feet or from hearing about Your deeds from Your devotees does not exist in Brahman, even though that is also a part of Your own majesty, O Lord.32 What to speak, then, [of the lesser pleasure experienced by the residents of the celestial realms], who fall from their celestial air-vehicles,33 when struck by the sword of Death.

11. Let me always have the association of those great pure-hearted

devotees, who are constantly immersed in devotion to You, O

unlimited One. With this, I will become intoxicated with drinking the nectar of the narrations about You, and easily cross over the

ocean of material existence, brimming with grave dangers.34

12. O Lord with the lotus navel! Your devotees' hearts are enamored

by the fragrance of Your lotus feet. Those who associate with them

forget about this mortal life, sons, friends, households, wealth, and

wives.'"

[…]

18. Maitreya said:

“Upon being glori ed in this way by the intelligent and noble—hearted Dhruva, the Lord, who is a ectionate to His devotees, greeted him kindly, and spoke as follows.

19. The Lord said:

‘I know the resolve in your heart, O prince. Your have upheld your

vow, so I will grant you that boon [which you desired], even though

it is one that is hard to attain.

20. My dear boy, one place that has never been ruled over by anyone else is the polestar, an e ulgent unmoving realm. The circuit

of the luminaries, stars, constellations, and planets revolves around

it.

[…]

25. After this life, you will go to My abode [Vaikuṇṭha35]. It is beyond [the realms] of the sages, and worshipped by all the

realms.’”

26. Maitreya said:

“Thus, the Lord, who had been worshipped in this way, bestowed

His personal abode on Dhruva. Then Bhagavān, whose banner bears

the emblem of Garuḍa,36 returned to His abode while the boy was watching.

27. Dhruva returned to the city. Although he had ful lled his wish

and attained the ful llment of his resolve by serving the feet of

Viṣṇu, the boy was not very happy in mind.”

28. Vidūra spoke: “How is it that Dhruva considered his own

personal goal to be unful lled? He understands the goals of human

life. 37 In just one life, he obtained the supreme abode, which is achieved by worshipping the feet of Hari, the possessor of māyā!”

29. Maitreya said:

“Dhruva’s heart was pierced by the arrows of his co-mother’s words. Because of harboring them in his mind, he did not desire liberation from the Lord of liberation. It is because of this that he became distressed.

30. Dhruva said:

‘Even the celibate Sanandana and his brothers38 did not attain the Lord’s abode in one birth through their samādhi, whereas I attained the shelter of His feet in six months. But my mind was xed on some

other goal, and so I squandered the opportunity.

31. Aho! Just see my materialism. I am so unfortunate: after attaining the lotus feet of the One who can dispel saṁsāra, I asked for something that was temporary instead.

[…]

33. I perceived reality through the lens of di erences, 39 and so, after submitting to the in uence of illusion (daivī-māyā), 40 I behaved like someone asleep. Even though there are no di erences [in reality], I was tormented in my heart by the scourge of enmity toward my

brother.

34. I requested Him for something useless—like requesting medicine

for someone already dead. The Soul of the Universe is very hard to

please, yet, after having managed to please Him with austerities, I then went and requested Him for saṁsāra41 — He who can dispel saṁsāra. I am so foolish.

35. Alas! Like a fool who, because of little merit, 42 requests some meager cha ed rice from someone who is a sovereign, I, because of

illusion, requested for my pride [to be upheld] from the Lord who

was o ering me His own personal abode.’”

36. Maitreya said:

“People like yourself, dear Vidūra, who relish the dust of Mukunda’s

[Kṛṣṇa’s] lotus feet, aspire to His servitude with no desire for personal bene t. They feel satis ed in their minds with whatever comes along providentially.

37. After hearing that his son was returning, as if coming back from

the dead, the king could not believe it: ‘I am so wretched. How has

this good fortune come for me?’

38. But, believing the words of Nārada, the celestial sage, the king

was overwhelmed with a surge of joy. In an ecstatic mood, he

bestowed a very valuable necklace as a gift to the bearer of the news.

39.–40. Eager to see his son, he mounted his chariot decorated with

gold and drawn by trusty steeds, and hastily set out from the city to

the sound of conches, drums, utes, and the chanting of Vedic

mantras. He was surrounded by brāhmaṇas, family elders, ministers, and friends.

41. His two queens, Sunīti and Suruci, adorned with golden

ornaments, mounted a palanquin along with Uttama, and also set

forth.

42. In the vicinity of the small forest, the king hastily got down from

his chariot when he saw his son arriving. He quickly approached

Dhruva, immersed in loving feelings.

43. The king, whose mind had long been full of regret and who was

breathing heavily, embraced his son with his two arms. Dhruva's bonds of sin had been entirely destroyed by the touch of the lotus

feet of the Lord of the Universe.

44. Then, the king, his heart's burning desire ful lled, smelled his

son's head repeatedly, 43 and bathed him with the cold tears from his eyes.

45. Dhruva, the most righteous of people, was lovingly welcomed and honored with blessings. He o ered obeisance to his father's feet,

and then bowed his head to his two mothers.

46. Suruci picked up the boy who was prostrated at her feet,

embraced him, and, with a voice stammering with tears, said: 'May

you live long.'

47. Just as water spontaneously [gravitates] to a lower place, all living beings o er respect to one who has pleased the Lord by means of one's qualities, friendly behavior, and such.

48. Uttama and Dhruva, both trembling with love for one another,

shed torrents of tears continuously, their hairs ecstatically standing

on end from the contact of each other's bodies.

49. Dhruva's mother, Sunīti, embraced her son, who was dearer to

her than even her life airs. Full of joy from the touch of his body,

she gave up her grief.

50. O hero Vidūra: the breasts of the mother of the hero were moistened by auspicious tears owing from her eyes, and milk

owed from them continuously.

51. The people praised that queen: 'Your son had been lost for such

a long time. But by good fortune he was regained and has removed

your anguish. In the future, he will be the protector of the entire earth.'"

Book IV, Chapter 11

Preamble *Dhruva's father eventually retires to the forest at the end of his life to contemplate the ātman , installing Dhruva on the throne. One day, Dhruva's brother, Uttama, is killed by a celestial yakṣa while hunting in the forest. Enraged, Dhruva sets out to the land of the yakṣas and challenges them to battle. A furious battle ensues, during which Dhruva slaughters countless yakṣas . His grandfather Svāyambhuva Manu, seeing this massacre, and feeling compassion for the yakṣas (also known as guhyakas), appears before his grandson.*

6. After seeing innocent guhyakas (yakṣas) being slaughtered by the powerful Dhruva on his amazing chariot, his grandfather Manu

approached Dhruva, the son of Uttānapāda, out of compassion,

accompanied by sages.

7. Manu said:

“Enough, my child, of this fury. It is sinful and the pathway to tamas. Blinded by this, you have abused these innocent, pious people.

8. Such a deed is not be tting our lineage, my dear child, and is forbidden by the righteous. You have undertaken a slaughter of

these celestials who have done nothing.

9. Consider, my child: you loved your brother, but, outraged by his

murder, many yakṣas have been killed by you, simply by dint of their kinship with just one who commited the crime.

10. To butcher living beings like beasts due to thinking the body to

be the self is not the way of the saintly (sādhus) who are devoted to Kṛṣṇa.

11. You worshipped Hari, the abode of all beings, by means of understanding that He is the ātman within all beings; as a result of this you won that supreme abode of Viṣṇu, which is so di cult to

attain.

12. You are that same person who did that then. You are beloved by

Hari, and you are also highly esteemed by people. How, then, by performing such a censurable act as this now, are you exemplifying

the behavior of the saintly?

13. Bhagavān, the ātman of everything, is pleased by tolerance, compassion, friendship, and equanimity for all creatures.

14. When Bhagavān is pleased, a person is freed from the guṇas of prakṛti, and, liberated, attains brahma-nirvāṇa.

15. Men and women are produced from the ve great elements, and

from the sexual union between them, further men and women are

produced in this world.

16. It is from the agitation of the guṇas of the māyā of the Supreme Ātman, O king, that the creation, maintenance, and withdrawal of the universe comes about.

17. The Supreme Puruṣa, who is transcendent to these guṇas, is merely the e cient cause of this universe of manifest and

unmanifest things. It is because of Him that the universe is set in motion, like iron [lings are set in motion by a magnet].

18. That Bhagavān projects his power by means of the activities of the guṇas through the power of Time. Therefore He creates, but yet is not the doer, and destroys, but is not the destroyer. The deeds of

the Supreme Being are di cult to fathom, indeed.

19. Although He Himself is without end in the form of Time, He causes death, and although He is changeless and without beginning,

He initiates everything. He causes the birth of progeny through others who were themselves progeny, and causes death to those

who in ict death on others.

20. There are no friends or enemies of the Supreme, for He pervades

all creatures equally in the form of death. The host of beings are subject to His ways, as He moves things along, just like particles of

dust in the wind.

21. It is that Supreme Lord who apportions the growth and decline

in life span of all living beings who are su ering [in saṁsāra]. But He Himself is self-su cient and transcendent to both.

22. Some call Him karma, O king, others Nature. Some call Him Time, and still others the desire (kāma) of men.

23. Who can know the design of He who manifests through his various powers (śaktis) but who is inconceivable and immeasurable, my child? He is the source of one's very own being!

24. These yakṣas, the followers of Kuvera, the treasurer of the celestials, were not the killers of your brother. Destiny is the cause

of the creation and demise of beings, my dear son!

25. It is He who creates, and He who maintains and destroys this

universe, yet He Himself is not propelled by the guṇas and karma, as He is devoid of all ego.

26. He is the ātman of all beings, the controller of all beings, and the source of all beings. Employing His power of māyā, He creates, maintains, and destroys all beings.

27. My dear Dhruva! Take refuge in Him with your whole being. He

is Destiny. He is death and immortality. He is the refuge of the universe. The secondary creators of the world44 bear o erings to Him, just like bulls who are controlled by a rope through the nose.

28. You, at ve years of age, were pierced to the heart by the words

of your co-mother, your father's other wife. So you left your own mother, went to the forest, worshipped the transcendent Viṣṇu

through austerities, and gained a place at the very top of the universe.

29. O child, seek Him within your heart, freed from anger. He is situated there, beyond the guṇas, infallible and unique. He is the Supreme Ātman,

the seer of the ātman. It is within Him that this world appears to be independent and unreal.

30. Therefore, o er your supreme bhakti to Him, the Supreme, the inner ātman, the in nite Bhagavān. He is pure bliss and the possessor of all powers. Then you will gradually pierce through the

bonds of ignorance, which have manifested in the form of 'I' and

'mine.'

31. O king, may you be blessed! Anger obstructs your ultimate

welfare: restrain your anger by means of immersing yourself

completely in the sacred teachings, which act just like medicine in counteracting disease.

32. People are terri ed by a person overwhelmed with anger. A wise

person desiring to attain a state of fearlessness for himself, does not

allow himself to fall under the control of anger.

33. You have committed an o ense against Kuvera, the brother of

Śiva, because, in a state of fury, you have slaughtered innocent yakṣas [his followers] thinking they were the murderers of your brother.

34. Pacify Kuvera immediately, O son, by o ering him obeisance, respect, and sweet words, lest the wrath of the great souls consume

our family dynasty.

35. After admonishing his grandson Dhruva in this manner,

Svāyambhuva Manu received respect from him and then departed to

his own city, accompanied by the sages."

Book IV, Chapter 12

1. Maitreya said:

“Upon understanding that Dhruva’s anger had subsided and that he

had desisted from the slaughter, Kuvera, the lord of wealth, went to

that place, praised by the celestial cāraṇas, yakṣas, and kinnaras. He addressed Dhruva, who was standing there with hands folded in

respect.

2. ‘ Bho! Bho! O faultless warrior prince! You have satis ed me! You have renounced anger on the instruction of your grandfather. It is so

hard to relinquish.

3. It is not you who killed the yakṣas, nor was it they who killed your brother. It is Time which is actually the controller of the coming and going of all beings.

4. Like a dreaming person, the false notions of “I” and “you” are meaningless; they arise from contemplating the unreal due to a

person’s ignorance. It is because of this that there is bondage and misfortune.

5.–6. Therefore go on your way, Dhruva. May there be good fortune

for you. For liberation from saṁsāra, worship Bhagavān, Viṣṇu, for He is the destroyer of saṁsāra. Do this while contemplating the ātman within all beings, as it is He who manifests as the ātman within all beings. His feet are worthy of worship. He is connected with his powers—those of māyā and of the ātman— yet He is separate from them.

7. Dear Dhruva! We have heard that you are inseparable from the

feet of Viṣṇu, from whose navel the lotus is born. Choose any wish,

O king, anything that enters your mind. Be happy and don't

hesitate: you deserve a boon, O son of Uttānapāda.'

8. Urged on by Kuvera, the king of kings, to pick a boon, the high-minded Dhruva, a great bhāgavata, chose unwavering remembrance

of Hari. It is by this that one easily crosses over tamas, which is so di cult to surpass.

9. With a satis ed heart, Kuvera awarded him this boon. Then as Dhruva was watching, he disappeared, and returned to his own city.

10. After this, with sacri cial rites and lavish wealth, Dhruva performed yajña, ceremonial rites, for Viṣṇu, who is the bestower of the fruits of ritual. The ritual involved wealth, sacri cial acts, and

the celestials.

11. Engaging in intense bhakti to the infallible Kṛṣṇa, the ātman of everything who is yet separate from everything, Dhruva perceived

Him, the Lord, situated in the ātman of all beings. 45

12. The citizens considered Dhruva to be like their father: he was

endowed with good character, devoted to the brāhmaṇas,

compassionate to the less fortunate, and the protector of the codes

of dharma.

13. He ruled the earth globe for thirty-six thousand years, destroying his pious karma through experiencing its fruition, and his impious karma through austerity.

14. After ruling the kingdom in this way for many years in a manner

conducive to the rst three goals of life, 46 the great-souled Dhruva, his senses completely controlled, transferred the royal throne to his

son in turn.

15. He considered this universe to be a mental construct produced

in dream through ignorance (avidyā) caused by māyā, like the city of the celestial gandharvas.47

16. After realizing that his body, wives, o spring, and friends; his

power, abundant treasury, harem, and beautiful pleasure groves;

and the entire earth bound like a girdle with oceans, were all temporal and subject to Time, Dhruva set out for the holy place Badarikāśrama. 48

17. He bathed in the pure waters of that place, his senses under control. He set up a sitting place (āsana), and with his breath restrained and his senses controlled by the mind, xed his mind on

that image of Bhagavān made of the gross elements (the Virāṭ49).

Then, after meditating on this without interruption, he relinquished

that form and entered into the state of samādhi, beyond thoughts. 50

18. Carried away by his bhakti to Bhagavān, Hari, he was continually overwhelmed with tear drops of ecstasy (ānanda) owing

ceaselessly. His body was covered with hairs that stood on end due

to bliss, and his heart melted. Freed from the subtle body, he lost

awareness of his body.

19. Then Dhruva saw a superb celestial vehicle descending from the

heavens, appearing like the full moon illuminating the ten

directions.

20. He saw two magni cent celestials standing on that. They had four arms, were blackish in complexion, and their eyes were reddish

like the lotus. They were holding clubs, beautifully dressed, and adorned with attractive earrings, armlets, necklaces, and helmets.

21. Upon realizing that they were two servants of Viṣṇu, Dhruva stood up. Out of astonishment, he had forgotten the proper etiquette

of welcome; so he o ered respects to the two associates of Viṣṇu by

reciting the names of Hari, the enemy of Madhu, with hands folded

in respect.

22. Sunanda and Nanda, the esteemed servants of the lotus-naveled

Viṣṇu, approached Dhruva. His mind was absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, his

hands were folded in respect, and his neck was bent in humility.

They addressed him.

23. Sunanda and Nanda said:

‘ Bho, Bho, O king, may you be blessed! Listen carefully to what we have to say. When you were ve years old, you thoroughly satis ed

the Lord with your austerities.

24. We two are the associates of the Lord, who is the wielder of the

śārṅga bow and the Creator of the entire universe. We have been sent here to bring you to Bhagavān’s abode.

25. Come! You have earned that abode of Viṣṇu, which is so hard to

attain. The celestials cannot attain it; they can only glimpse at it from afar. The moon, sun, stars, constellations, planets, and all

celestial bodies circumambulate it on the right.51

26. This realm has never been attained by any of your forefathers,

dear Dhruva. Come now to the supreme abode of Viṣṇu, which is glori ed by all the universes.

27. You have earned the right to ascend this divine vehicle. It has

been sent by the supreme Lord, who is praised in the best of verses.’”

28. Maitreya said:

“After hearing the nectarlike words of those eminent servants from

Vaikuṇṭha, Dhruva, beloved of Viṣṇu, took a purifying bath,

performed his daily auspicious duties, o ered his respects to the two

sages, and returned their blessings.

29. After circumambulating that splendid vehicle, Dhruva

worshipped it, o ered respects to the two Vaikuṇṭha associates

again, and assumed a golden form. He then desired to mount up on

that carrier.

30. Then Dhruva, the son of Uttānapāda, saw that Death had

approached. He put his foot on the head of Death,52 and climbed onto that marvelous aerial structure.

31. At this, the prominent gandharvas resounded their mṛdaṅga, paṇava, and other such drums, sang, and showered down kusuma owers like rain.

32. As he was about to ascend up beyond the celestial realms, Dhruva remembered his mother, Sunīti, and thought: 'I will give up

going to Viṣṇu's realm, even though it is so hard to attain, and go to

my poor mother instead.'

33. Having understood his resolve, those two eminent divine beings

showed Dhruva that the queen was already proceeding ahead of

them in another vehicle.

34. Here and there along the path of ascent, Dhruva saw the planets

one by one. As he was proceeding along, he was bestrewed with divine owers from the celestials in their vehicles as they glori ed

him.

35. Traversing beyond the three worlds and even the realm of the

sages[53] on that celestial vehicle, Dhruva then reached the realm of Viṣṇu beyond all that. He had attained an eternal destination.

36. It was e ulgent through its own all-pervading luster—it is on account of that e ulgence that these three worlds here shine. Those

who are not compassionate to other living entities do not attain that

place—only those who constantly perform auspicious deeds attain

there.

37. Those dear to Kṛṣṇa, the infallible Lord, are peaceful,

equanimous, pure, and a ectionate to all beings. Even those who are friends with them easily go to the abode of Viṣṇu.

38. In this way, Dhruva, son of Uttānapāda, who was fully devoted

to Kṛṣṇa, became like the crest jewel of the three worlds.

39. The circle of constellations are placed around this realm [the polestar] and revolve around it with great power ceaselessly, like a

herd of bulls circle a central post.

40. After seeing the greatness of Dhruva, the eminent sage Nārada

sang verses about him at the sacri ce of the Pracetās, while

plucking his vīṇā.

41. Nārada sang: ‘Despite knowing the means to do so, the followers

of the Vedas are not capable of approaching the destination attained

by Dhruva, the son of the chaste Sunīti, through the power of his

austerities—what to speak then of kings attaining this?

42. At the age of ve years, he departed to the forest with a heart

tormented by the piercing words of his father's co-wife. Following

my instructions, he conquered the unconquerable Lord, won over by

the qualities of His bhakta.

43. When Dhruva was ve or six years old, he pleased the Lord of

Vaikuṇṭha, and attained His realm. A kṣatriya warrior in this world might at best desire to ascend to that realm even after many years,

but it was attained by Dhruva in a few days.'"

The Tale of King Pṛthu: The Ideal Monarch

Yoga Blueprint *The teachings in this section continue in the vein of normative Yoga philosophy.*

What is noteworthy in this passage is the preeminent regard and respect that is o ered to those

sages who teach and exemplify such teachings.

Book IV, Chapter 22

1. Maitreya said:

“While the citizens were extolling King Pṛthu of great fame, the four

boy sages (Kumāras), who were as e ulgent as the sun, approached that place.

2. The king, along with his entourage, saw those perfected masters

(siddhas) descending from the sky. They were recognizable by their e ulgence, and were purifying the worlds of sin.

3. Pṛthu, son of Venu, along with his entourage and followers, jumped up, trying to regain his breath that had been lost from seeing those sages. They appeared just like the jīva, lord of the senses, [captivated by] the sense objects made from the guṇas.

4. Feeling overwhelmed by their august presence, the king arranged

for them to be worshipped once they had accepted seats and other

items used for welcoming guests. With head bowed he was humble

and courteous.

5. He sprinkled his hair knot with the water that had washed their

feet. By this, he was behaving in the manner of those who are cultured, to demonstrate respect.

6. The king, who was endowed with faith and sense control, was delighted. He addressed the Kumāras, elder brothers of Śiva,54 who had taken their seats on golden thrones, appearing like the sacred

res in their respective sacri cial hearths.

7. ‘ Aho! What auspicious act must I have performed, O you who embody auspiciousness, as a result of which I have obtained your darśana (a sight of you). You are di cult to see even by the yogīs.

8. What is there that is di cult to attain for anyone when the sages,

and Śiva and Viṣṇu, along with their followers, are pleased with that

person?

9. The world cannot perceive those sages who wander about, just as

the material elements, the causes of this world, cannot perceive the

ātman that exists in all, and that is the seer of all.

10. Even if they are poor, those saintly householders are blessed whose houses contain water, grass mats, accommodation, servants,

and masters that can be o ered to saints.

11. But those houses are just like trees which are the abodes of serpents if, despite being replete with all goods, they do not contain

water to wash the feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.

12. Welcome, O you best of the twice-born. Desiring liberation, you

have been observing vows faithfully. Although you are boys, your minds are xed and you have attained success.

13. How can there be any auspiciousness in store for us, O masters,

who think that the purpose of life is the objects of the senses? Due

to our own deeds, we have fallen into this world, which is a reservoir of vice.

14. There is no need to ask after the welfare of your lordships. You

enjoy the bliss of the ātman, and thoughts of good fortune or misfortune do not arise in you.

15. You are the well-wishers of those in distress, therefore, with faith in you, I ask you: How can salvation be attained in this world

of saṁsāra?

16. The unborn Bhagavān is the revealer of the ātman, and, in fact, He is the ātman of those who know the ātman. It is certain that He wanders around this world in the form of perfected beings such as

yourselves so as to bestow compassion to His devotees.’”

17. Maitreya said:

“After hearing from Pṛthu such praises—gracious, tting, insightful, and measured—the Kumāras were pleased. Smiling, they replied.

18. Sanat-Kumāra said: ‘You have inquired perfectly, O great king,

with the welfare of all living beings at heart, even though you know

the answers. Such wisdom is be tting the saintly.

19. The association of the saintly is truly bene cial to both parties

[speaker and hearer]: the discourses and queries of such association

enhance the satisfaction of everyone.

20. O king, it seems that you have an unshakable attraction for reciting the qualities of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Madhu.

Such attraction is hard to attain. It clears away the impurities covering the mind in the form of lust.

21. This much is certain, according to the scriptures that have undertaken a thorough inquiry of the matter: the source of welfare

for people is detachment from whatever is di erent from the ātman, and rm attraction toward the ātman and brahman, which is beyond the guṇas.

22. [A ection for Hari, who is Brahman, transcendent to the guṇas, easily develops] by means of faith, by observance of the Bhagavata

dharma, by inquiry into Truth, by determined application of the yoga of transcendence, by unceasing worship of the Lord of Yoga (yogeśvara), and by pure-hearted discussion about the Lord.

23. By distaste for the company of those who delight in the senses

and material possessions and by disinterest in their opinions, by delighting in solitude absorbed in the contentment of the ātman except when drinking the nectar of the qualities of Hari.

24. By nonviolence (ahiṁsā), by the conduct of the great saints, by remembering the nectar of the great deeds of Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa], by

following moral and ethical precepts (yamas and niyamas), by renouncing lust (kāma), by not criticizing, by being free of ambition, and by tolerating the dualites.

25. By continually discussing with devotion the names and qualities dedicated to Hari, which are ornaments for the ears, by disinterest

in that which is other than the ātman, and in the causes and e ects of the material world, by all these, a ection for Hari, who is Brahman, transcendent to the guṇas, easily develops.

26. When un inching faith has developed in brahman, then a person, under the guidance of a guru (ācārya), speedily burns up the layers surrounding the ātman (kośas), making them impotent, like the eruption of re burns its source. These kośas, constituting ve aspects,55 lie in the heart.

27. When the stock of karma (āśaya) has been burned, and one has been freed from all its qualities, one no longer sees either the internal or external coverings that previously separated the ātman from the Paramātman, the Supreme—just as, when a dream comes to an end, a person no longer sees the objects within it.

28. It is because the covering in the form of this stock exists, that a

person can see nothing other than him or herself, the objects of the

senses, and that which is beyond both [the ego]. Otherwise this would not occur.

29. This is like the fact that it is only when a cause is present—such

as water or other re ecting things like mirrors—that a person can

see the di erence between him or herself and the re ection.

Otherwise this would not occur.

30. The mind is drawn by objects that attract the senses. When a person is contemplating these objects, the mind diverts the

discrimination of the intelligence, just like a dam diverts the water

of a pond.

31. When thought (citta) is distracted in this way, memory [of the ātman] is lost. In the destruction of memory, knowledge is lost. The sages consider this to be the concealment of the ātman by the

mind.56

32. There is no greater loss to a person's self-interest in this world, than the loss of one's own ātman; it is for the ātman that other

things are held dear.57

33. Contemplating wealth and the objects of the senses causes the

destruction of a person's own self-interest. From the loss of

knowledge and realization that occurs because of this, one enters the immovable species of life [plants and the like].

34. One desiring to cross over the depths of tamas should not become attached to anything which completely obstructs dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa (the four goals of life: righteousness, prosperity, sense indulgence, and liberation).

35. Among these, mokṣa, liberation, is deemed as the greatest, because the other three goals of life are always subject to the fear of

loss.

36. There are higher and lower states of existence for living beings

brought about by the agitation of the guṇas. But there is no security for any of them, since their hopes are dashed by the Lord [in the

form of Time].

37. Therefore you should understand Bhagavān, O king. He always

shines forth, manifesting everywhere in all hearts and illuminating

from within the souls of all moving and non-moving entities, 58 who are covered by mind, intelligence, life airs, senses, and bodies.

38. I surrender to Him. His nature is eternally liberated,

transcendent, and pure. Prakṛti with all its karmas is removed by Him. This universe manifests within Him as māyā in the form of cause and e ect. This māyā illusion is dispelled by discrimination (viveka), just as the perception of a snake in what is really a garland is dispelled by discrimination.

39. Worship Vāsudeva; He is your refuge. The saints unravel the knots of accumulated karma (karmāśaya) through their bhakti to His lustrous feet, which are like lotus petals. Those whose minds are

separated from Him, in contrast, are not able to control the senses, which ow forth like rivers, even though they struggle to do so.

40. The ocean of saṁsāra is lled with the crocodiles of the six senses. Great di culty awaits those in this world who seek to cross

over it by their own struggles without using the boat of Īśvara.

Therefore, you should make a vessel of the adorable lotus feet of Bhagavān, Hari, and cross over this peril in the form of this insurmountable ocean.’”

41. Maitreya said:

“In this manner, the path of the ātman was revealed to the king by one of the Kumāras, the son of Brahmā, who had insight into the ātman. After honoring him, the king replied to him.

42. The king said:

‘The compassionate Hari previously granted grace on me, and now,

O great brāhmaṇa, you have arrived to bestow it upon me.

43. You have accomplished this expertly, O lord; you have been most compassionate. What is there that I can o er you? Everything I

own belongs to the great saints, including my very self.

44. My life airs, consorts, o spring, furnished residences, kingdom,

power, land, and treasury are hereby all presented to you.

45. One who has realized the Truths of the Vedas and sacred texts

deserves control over the army, kingdom, legal jurisdiction, and lordship over all realms.

46. The brāhmaṇa eats his own food, wears his own clothing, and

gives away his own property. The kṣatriyas and other castes consume foodstu s by the grace of the brāhmaṇas. 59

47. This path of Bhagavān pertaining to the knowledge of the ātman has been thoroughly presented by them, the knowers of the Veda.

They are supremely benevolent and are always content merely with

their own deeds. So with what, exactly, can one repay them, other

than with a nominal drink of water?’”

48. Maitreya continued:

“Those lords of the yoga of the ātman were thus honored by the emperor. Then, praising the character of such a king, they

disappeared into the sky, before the very eyes of all the people.

49. King Pṛthu, son of Venu, eminent among great souls, became committed to these teachings about the Supreme Ātman. Absorbed

in the ātman, he considered that all his desires had been ful lled.

50. He performed his duties as an o ering to Brahman, in accordance with the appropriate time, place, capabilities, protocols,

and resources.

51. Fully devoted, he dedicated the fruits of his work to Brahman freed from all attachments. 60 He considered himself to be a witness to action, the ātman transcendent to prakṛti. 61

52.–53. Just as the sun [is detached from a airs in the world, despite shining upon it], the king did not become attached to the objects of the senses despite living in his home endowed with

regality and royal opulence. His mind was free of ego, and he fully

performed his duties in this manner while performing the yoga of the ātman.”

Book IV, Chapter 23

1.–3. Maitreya continued: “Pṛthu, son of Venu, was self-controlled.

He was the upholder of the citizens, and by his e orts his kingdom

had prospered in all areas. He had provided livelihoods for all moving and non-moving entities and had upheld the law of dharma

for all creatures. He had ful lled the instruction of Īśvara, as it was for this reason that he had taken birth. One day, after seeing that his

body had succumbed to old age, he transferred the earth to his sons,

and set out alone with his wife for the forest to perform austerities

(tapas). The citizens were disconsolate and the very earth seemed to weep from separation.

4. There, rm in his vow, he immersed himself in severe austerity

(tapas) recommended by the Vaikhānasa texts for the vānaprastha phase of life62—just as he had previously done when conquering the world.

5. His food consisted of bulbs, roots, and fruits and sometimes dried

leaves. Sometimes, for several weeks, he consumed water, and

thereafter subsisted only on air.

6. His bed was the bare ground. In the summer, the hero performed

the austerity of the ‘ ve res,’63 and in the rainy season, the sage tolerated the rains. In the winter he immersed himself up to the neck in water.

7. He was tolerant, with senses restrained and words controlled. He

restrained his semen, and controlled his breath. Desiring to

propitiate Kṛṣṇa, he performed the highest type of austerity.

8. His accumulation of karma and impurities was destroyed by the gradual pursuit of perfection. The six senses were restrained by the

practice of prāṇāyāma, breath control, and his bonds of saṁsāra were cut.

9. Whatever the great Sanat-kumāra had taught him about that

highest yoga of the supreme self, that bull among men worshipped the Supreme Person accordingly.

10. Undeviating bhakti to Bhagavān, who is Brahman, was performed by that saint. He constantly endeavored with faith in upholding the

bhāgavata- dharma.

11. In this way, his mind became completely pure by devotional activities for Bhagavān. By lling it with remembrance of Kṛṣṇa,

knowledge endowed with renunciation arose in his mind. With the penetrating insight from this, he severed the covering (kośa) of his ātman, which is the abode of doubt. 64

12. Having realized the nature of his ātman, he severed the illusion of being the mind and body and subsequently became freed from all

desires. He next even renounced that state, and then severed the realization obtained through this insight in turn. 65 Until an ascetic yogī ceases to be distracted by the processes [and mystic powers] of yoga, attraction for the stories of Kṛṣṇa, the younger brother of Balarāma, will not manifest.

13. In this manner, that best of heroes joined his mind with his innermost ātman, became absorbed in Brahman and, when the due time came, relinquished his own material body.

14. He blocked his anus with his heels, slowly drawing the life airs

up through the navel, then the stomach, then xing it in the heart,

then farther up into the throat, then farther up still to between the

eyebrows. 66

15. Raising the air up farther, he settled it in the head, free from all desires. Then he united the air with the totality of air, the body with

the earth, and the re of the body with re.

16. He merged the cavities of the body with air, and the bodily uids with water. He returned earth into water, that water into re,

that into air, and that into ether, returning everything to its original

source.67

17. He merged the mind into the senses, and the senses into the tanmātra subtle qualities from which they had originally emerged.

He withdrew all these, along with the gross elements, etc., into the

great cosmic mahat (undi erentiated state of prakṛti).68

18. He then placed that reservoir of all the guṇas into the jīva conditioned by māyā. Then Pṛthu, a being still covered by māyā due to being situated in a body composed of material coverings, nally

gave the body up entirely through the force of knowledge and

renunciation, and remained situated in his own true nature (svarūpa). He was now liberated.

19. The great queen Arci, who was delicate and beautiful and whose

feet were not suitable for touching the rough ground, followed her

husband to the forest.

20. Although she was severely emaciated by austerities, she did not

experience any discomfort because she was true to her vows of

dharma for her husband, desiring only to serve him. Maintaining her body like a forest sage [with forest fruits and produce], she

experienced complete satisfaction in her mind by touching the hand

of her beloved husband.

21. When she saw the body of that compassionate lord of both the

world and of herself completely deprived of all consciousness and signs of life, that pious lady wept a little, then placed it on a funeral pyre at the top of a hill.

22. After she had performed the prescribed rites, she bathed in the

waters of a river, and o ered water oblations to her husband of magnanimous deeds. Then she o ered obeisance to the celestials,

circumambulated the pyre, and entered the ames, meditating on

the feet of her husband.

23. Seeing that chaste lady following her husband, Pṛthu, the best of

heroes, the wives of the celestials in their thousands, along with their husbands, showered blessings upon her.

24. Releasing showers of owers on that hilltop, they extolled her

among themselves while celestial drums resounded.

25. The celestial ladies said:

‘ Aho! This spouse is most blessed! She served her husband, the lord of all the kings of the earth, with her whole being, just as Lakṣmī,

the Goddess of Fortune, serves her husband, Viṣṇu, the Lord of sacri ce.

26. Just see—following her husband, Pṛthu, son of Venu, she has proceeded beyond us [in the celestial realms] and is going up on high [to Vaikuṇṭha] by dint of her astonishing deeds.

27. What else is there to attain in this world for those mortals who,

despite having a ickering life span, have attained the transcendent

realm of Bhagavān?

28. Anyone in this world who, after obtaining with great di culty a

human form, which can bestow liberation, becomes entangled in

sense objects instead, is cheated and has become an enemy of his ātman.’

29. While the celestial damsels were praising her in this way, the chaste wife went to the realm her husband had attained. Pṛthu, who

had taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, was the most eminent of the knowers of

ātman.

30. Such was the glory of that Pṛthu, the best of the bhāgavata devotees. His story has now been recounted to you. It is the best of

stories.

31. Anyone who reads this extremely auspicious story with great faith, or who recites it or hears it, attains to the realm of Pṛthu (Vaikuṇṭha).

32. By reading it, a brāhmaṇa becomes endowed with the potency of brahman, a monarch becomes lord of the earth, a vaiśya (merchant) becomes master of wealth, and a śūdra (laborer) the best of saints.69

33. After hearing it three times attentively, one who has no progeny,

whether man or woman, becomes endowed with excellent o spring,

and a pauper becomes conspicuously wealthy.

34. A person with no claim to fame becomes famous, and a fool becomes a paṇḍita. This story becomes the vehicle of bringing good fortune to people and warding o inauspiciousness.

35. It bestows wealth, fame, longevity, access to the celestial realms, and removes the impurities of the age of Kali. It provides the perfections of dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa70 to those desiring these. One should hear it with faith, as it is the supreme cause of these four goals of human life.

36. A king inclined toward conquest who sets forth on a campaign

after hearing this narrative will nd other kings presenting tribute

to him before he arrives, just as they did to Pṛthu.

37. One should hear, recite, and read the story of Pṛthu, son of Venu, freed from all other attachments, while engaging in pure

bhakti to Bhagavān.

38. O Vidura! Thus has been narrated this story revealing the glories

of the great souls (mahat). One who follows it attains the destination of Pṛthu, beyond death.

39. Hearing this story of Pṛthu every day with respect, and reciting

it, a person becomes freed from all attachments and attains

complete love for the feet of Bhagavān, which are the boat for traversing the ocean of saṁsāra."

The Allegory of King Purañjana: The Illusion of Sensual Pleasures

Yoga Blueprint *The teachings in this section point to the foolishness and dangers of immersing oneself in romantic reveries and sensual indulgences from the point of view of the ultimate purpose of the human form of life, realizing the ātman . The allegory illustrates the ephemeral nature of material pleasures, which are inevitably vanquished by old age and death. The nal section includes some particularly profound insights into the nature of the mind (IV.29.60–85).*

[All the items from verse 10 below until chapter 28 have allegorical signi cance. Their interpretation is given in chapter 28 verse 55 ., so they will make limited sense until then. Nonetheless, the reader is encouraged to peruse chapters 22–25 patiently; while the allegory is somewhat lengthy, it imparts powerful yogic teachings.]

Book IV, Chapter 25

3. Prācīnabarhiṣat's mind was absorbed in ritualistic activities. 71

Once, sage Nārada, who is compassionate and realized in the truth

of the ātman, went to him to enlighten him: 4. "O king! What real bene t for yourself do you seek from ritual activities? Real bene t is

the removal of su ering and the attaining of happiness, but these goals are not achieved from the performance of ritual acts."

5. The king replied:

“O saintly one! My mind has become addicted to ritual activity—I

do not know anything else. Please reveal to me the pure knowledge

by which I can become free from such ritual activity.

6. The householder life has super cial things as its dharma—the mind pursues wealth, wife, and o spring as its goals. A fool who is

wandering on the path of saṁsāra does not consider anything to be higher.”

7. Nārada said: “Bho! Bho! O king! Just look at the hosts of creatures mercilessly slaughtered by you in the thousands as sacri cial

animals for the o ering—you who are [supposed to be] the

protector of creatures!

8. Remembering your butchery, they are all awaiting you [in the next life]: after you have died, they will furiously pierce you with

their horns, hard as iron.

9. Now I will relate to you this ancient tale (itihāsa). As I narrate, try to gain insight from the story of Purañjana!

10. There was once a king of great renown by name of Purañjana, O

king. He had a friend called the Unknown One (Avijñāta), whose activities were unknown.

11. The king wandered over the earth seeking a residence. When he

could not nd a suitable place, he became somewhat despondent.

12. Desiring pleasure, he did not consider any of the cities that existed on the earth suitable for ful lling this or that desire of his.

13. Once, on the southern plateaus of the Himālaya mountains,

Purañjana saw a city with nine gates, distinctive with good features.

14. It was lled everywhere with ramparts, parks, watchtowers,

moats, windows, and with houses whose roofs were made of gold,

silver, and iron.

15. The oors of its mansions were inlaid with sapphires, crystals,

cat's-eyes, pearls, and rubies; it was like the celestial city of Bhogavatī[72] in beauty.

16. It was endowed with assembly houses, crossroads, highways,

playing grounds, resting places, markets, monuments, ags, banners,

and coral balconies.

17. In a grove outside the city there were celestial trees and creepers, and a lake with swarms of humming bees, and chirping birds.

18. The city was made beautiful with lotuses, their fresh leaves and

stems swaying in a breeze fragrant with the scent of varieties of owers, and bearing the spray of cool waterfalls.

19. A traveler to that place would think he or she was being called

by the cooing of cuckoos. And the place was free of dangers, as the

herds of various wild animals had taken the vows of sages [that is,

nonviolence].

20. The king happened there by chance, and saw an extremely

beautiful maiden approaching. She was accompanied by ten

attendants, each of whom was the husband of one hundred wives.

21. She could change her form at will, and was guarded by a ve—

hooded serpent as bodyguard. Just on the cusp of maturity, the maiden was searching for a male.

22. The maiden had a shapely nose, perfect teeth, comely cheeks, and an exceptionally beautiful face. In her ears, which were

symmetrically aligned, she wore attractive earrings.

23. She was dark in complexion, and had wrapped a reddish-colored piece of cloth around her well-formed hips. Walking along with her

feet making tingling sounds from their anklets, she seemed like a goddess.

24. Her two breasts, equally rounded and with no space between them, revealed her youthfulness, and she was covering them with the end of her garment out of shyness. She swayed like an elephant

in the way she walked.73

25. The hero was smitten by the arrows of her tender glances and

the dancing of her enticing eyebrows. She looked very beautiful with her bashful smiles. Purañjana gently spoke to her: 26. ‘Who are

you, with eyes like lotus petals? What is your family lineage? From

where have you come, O chaste lady? What do you seek to

accomplish here on the outskirts of this city? Please tell me, O shy

one!

27. Who are these attendants, with that formidable warrior as their

eleventh member? And these beautiful damsels? Who is this serpent

that goes before you, O you with beautiful eyebrows?

28. Are you the Goddess Hrī? Or Bhavānī (Parvatī)? Or the Goddess

of speech (Sarasvatī)? Or, like a sage in solitude in the forest, are

you by chance seeking a husband? If so, he must have ful lled all

his wishes by desiring your lotus feet. [If you are the Goddess of Fortune,] where is the lotus that has fallen from your ngers?74

29. You must be someone other than those Goddesses, O you with

beautiful thighs, because you touch the ground [with your feet]. 75

You should adorn this city together with me—just like the Goddess

Śrī with Viṣṇu, the Lord of Sacri ce, in the divine realm [of Vaikuṇṭha]. I am an outstanding hero who has performed many

great feats!

30. Therefore, bestow your favor upon me, O beautiful one—my

senses have been shattered by your sidelong glances! The mind-born

god Cupid, struck by your dancing eyebrows and bashful smiles of

love,76 is harassing me.

31. O you with beautiful eyebrows, your face, encircled by locks of

dangling blue curls, has beautiful sparkling eyes and utters sweet words. Please raise it and show it to me, do not turn away out of

bashfulness, O you with a bright smile!'

32. 'O hero!' The woman, enchanted by the hero Purañjana—who

was begging like one who is not a hero77—greeted him smilingly: 33. 'We do not properly know who begot me or these others, O bull

among men, nor do we know our family lineage or our name.

34. I do not know by whom this city was constructed, O hero, but it

is my refuge. I know only that I am here now and nothing more than that.

35. O respectful sir! These men and women are my male and female

friends. This snake remains awake guarding the city when I am

sleeping.

36. By chance you have come along and you seek worldly pleasure.

May good fortune be yours. I along with my friends will provide these for you, O subduer of enemies.

37. Reside in this city of nine gates for one hundred years, O Lord,

enjoying the sensual pleasures that I shall provide.

38. Indeed, whom else should I please other than you? Someone

who is not learned? Someone untutored in erotic pleasures?

Someone who is not interested in the next life? Or someone like an

animal who does not care for the morrow?

39. It is in the here and now that righteous conduct (dharma), economic well-being (artha), sense indulgence (kāma), the joy of children,

liberation, and fame are attained as well as the pure celestial realms free of sorrow, which even the knowers of the self (kevalin) do not know.

40. The sages say that in this world, the householder stage of life (gṛhāśrama), is the only foundation for the well-being of the forefathers, gods, sages, humans, and all beings including oneself.

41. O hero! What woman like me would not accept an available husband who is famous, generous, handsome, and loving like you?

42. O mighty-armed one! Which woman's mind in this world would not cling to your arms, which are like the coils of a serpent? You roam about in order to remove the anguish of the unfortunate with your smiling glances full of compassion.'"

43. Nārada said: "Thus, the couple entered into a mutual agreement right there and then. Then they entered into the city, O king, and enjoyed for a hundred years.

44. In the hot season, eulogized sweetly by singers while frolicking here and there, the king entered a lake surrounded by women.

45. There were seven upper gates of the city, and two lower, made for the purpose of transporting di erent objects for whomever was the master of the city.

46. Five of the gates were to the east, or front, one to the south, and another one to the north. I will describe to you the names of the two

gates to the west, O king!

47. The two gates to the front, Khadyotā (the left eye) and

Āvirmukhī (the right eye), were built in one location. Through

these, the king used to go to a country called Vibhrājita (the one made bright), with his friend Dyumān (the shining one).

48. Nalinī and Nālinī (the nostrils) were also built in one location to

the front. Through these, the king used to go to the place called Saurabham (fragrance) with his friend Avadhūta (the discarded).

49. The gate called Mukhya (principle) was to the east and the king

of the city used to go through that to the two countries Āpaṇa (speech) and Bahūdana (collection of eatables). He was

accompanied by Rasajñā (the tongue) and Vipaṇa (the organ of

speech).

50. Purañjana went through the southern gate of the city called Piṭṛhū (invoking the ancestors), to the country of the southern

Pañcālas (the path to the forefathers). He was accompanied by Śrutadhara (the organ of hearing), O king.

51. Purañjana went through the northern gate of the city called Devahū (invoking the gods) accompanied by Śrutadhara, to the

country of the northern Pañcālas (the path to the gods).

52. The name of the western gate was Āsurī (penis). Purañjana went

through that to the country called Grāmaka (common pleasure),

accompanied by Durmadena (drunkard).

53. The name of [the other] western gate was Nirṛti (death). Purañjana went through that to the country called Vaiśasa (destruction), accompanied by Lubdhaka (greedy person).

54. From the citizens, two were blind: Nirvāk (foot) and Peśaskṛit (hand). With these, the lord, the owner of the senses, goes about and performs work.

55. When he went to the inner quarters of the palace accompanied by Viṣūcīna (going in all directions), Purañjana experienced illusion, peace, and joy derived from his wife and o spring.

56. The foolish king, his mind overcome with passion and attached to enjoying the fruits of his actions, was cheated in this way. Whatever the queen wished for, he obliged.

57. When sometimes she drank liquor, he drank, and became intoxicated. When sometimes she ate, he ate; when at other times she took her meal, he took his meal.

58. When sometimes she sang, he sang; when sometimes she cried, he cried; when at other times she laughed, he laughed; when sometimes she gossiped, he gossiped.

59. When sometimes she ran, he ran; when sometimes she stood up, he stood up; when sometimes she lay down, he lay down; and when at other times she sat up, he sat up.

60. When sometimes she listened to something, he listened to it; when sometimes she looked at something, he looked at it; when

sometimes she smelled something, he smelled it; and when at other times she touched something, he touched it.

61. When sometimes his wife was grieving for something, he

grieved, like a bereaved soul. And when at times she rejoiced, he rejoiced; while when at other times she was delighted, he became

delighted.

62. In this way, he was ensnared by the queen and cheated out of all

[the qualities] of his own personality and nature. The ignorant fellow, even when unwilling, obliged her out of weakness, like a pet

animal."

Book IV, Chapter 26

1. Śrī Nārada said: "The king, who was a great archer, mounted a chariot, drawn by ve eet horses. It had two pole shafts, two

wheels, three banners, and ve tethers.

2. It had one rein, one charioteer, one chariot seat, two poles, ve

carriage boxes, seven chariot bumpers, and could perform ve types

of movements.

3. After mounting the golden vehicle, armed with a quiver of

inexhaustible arrows and accompanied by his eleventh general, the

king set out for a forest that had ve plateaus.

4. Taking up his bow and arrows, the arrogant man roamed about there in the chase. Delighting in the sport of hunting, he left behind his wife, who did not deserve such treatment.

5. Succumbing to a demoniac mentality, his mind became cruel and without compassion, and he slaughtered the wild animals in the forests with his sharpened arrows.

6. It is prescribed in the sacred texts that if a king is greedy, he may hunt animals for sacri ce in sacred places at speci ed times, O king, but only as many as is necessary for this speci c purpose.

7. A learned person who performs actions that have been prescribed by the sacred texts is not tainted by that action, O Lord of kings: on the contrary, knowledge is attained from such actions.

8. But otherwise, an egotistical person who performs actions is bound [by the reactions]. Falling under the control of the ow of the guṇas, such a person's wisdom is destroyed and he strays into darkness.

9. Carnage was unleashed on the poor animals in that forest, and their limbs were pierced by arrows with all sorts of feathers. It was an unbearable sight for anyone who was kindhearted.

10. After killing hares, boars, bu alo, gavaya ox, antelopes, porcupines, as well as other animals that were appropriate for sacri ce, the king became exhausted.

11. So, a icted by hunger and thirst, he desisted and returned to

his residence. There, he took bath, ate appropriate foodstu s, and then lay down to rest until his fatigue passed.

12. Then the king made himself presentable with fragrance, oils, garlands, etc. After this, with all the limbs of his body nicely adorned, he set his mind on his queen.

13. Satis ed, happy, and full of himself, the king's mind was

attracted by Cupid. But he could not nd his beautiful wife, the lady

of the house.

14. Anxious, he inquired from the ladies in the inner quarters, O

King Prācīnabarhis: 'Is all well with you, ladies, and with your mistress, too, as before?

15. The opulence of a house does not shine if the mother or the dutiful wife is not present—just like a chariot without its parts.

What sensible person would remain in such a place, like a wretch?

16. Where is my charming wife? Illuminating my every step with wisdom, she always lifts me up when I am sunk in an ocean of worries!'

17. The ladies replied:

‘O Lord of men! We do know what is going on in your beloved’s mind. Look: she is lying over there on the bare oor, O subduer of

the enemies.’”

18. Nārada said: “Purañjana’s intelligence was agitated due to

attachment to his wife. When he saw his queen lying unkempt on

the oor, he fell into a state of great distress.

19. Although he was consoling her with sweet words with a burning

heart, the king did not receive any indication from his beloved that

she was angry at him out of love.

20. The hero, who was expert in conciliation, gradually consoled her. He touched her two feet, seated her on his lap, and caressed her. Then he spoke to her.

21. Purañjana said: ‘Even if they have committed an o ense,

servants are unfortunate if their masters do not in ict corrective punishment on them on the grounds that the servants are part of the

master’s entourage, O beautiful one.

22. Punishment meted out on servants by the master is the greatest

mercy; only an immature intolerant person does not recognize this

to be an act of benevolence toward that person.

23. Please show us your face cast down out of bashfulness and the

weight of love, O wise lady. Beaming with smiling glances, and decorated with blue locks of hair like bees, it has beautiful teeth, eyebrows, and nose and utters sweet words. I am yours.

24. I will in ict punishment on whoever has committed an o ense

against you—unless he be a brāhmaṇa or a servant of Viṣṇu.78 You are the wife of a hero: I will see to it that that person is not joyful or free from fear anywhere in the three worlds or beyond.

25. I have never seen your face without tilaka (sacred clay marking), or dirty, joyless, furious out of anger, colorless, or bereft of passion.

Nor have I ever seen your two perfectly formed breasts heaving in

sorrow, and your red bimba fruit–colored lips bereft of their kuṅkuma powder color.

26. I am your best friend, but I committed an o ense: addicted to the vice of hunting, I went o to the chase on a whim. What woman, eager [for love], would not accept a lover who has come under her control, his manly pride shattered by the force of Cupid's owery arrows? So please forgive me.'"

Book IV, Chapter 27

1. Nārada said: "Having brought Purañjana under her complete

control by her wiles in this manner, Queen Purañjanī enjoyed her

husband, and gave him enjoyment, O great king.

2. The king was delighted when his queen approached him with a

bright face, contented, bathed, and auspiciously adorned, O king.

3. Pressed to the bosom of his wife, his neck embraced and his mind

stolen away by intimate exchanges, the king was unaware of the speedy passage of insurmountable Time: he was captured by that

enchanting woman day and night.

4. Overcome by tamas and bound by passion, the noble-minded king lay on a priceless bed with his queen's arms as his pillow. He thought of her as the highest thing in his life, and did not think of

his own higher goal.

5. While he was enjoying with his wife in this way, his mind tainted

by lust, the king's youth passed by as if it were half an instant, O

Lord of kings.

6. Purañjana begot eleven hundred sons in Queen Purañjanī, but

half his life was consumed in doing so, O sovereign!

7. He also begot one hundred and ten daughters, O protector of men. Named the Paurañjanīs, and endowed with good qualities,

character, and magnanimity, they enhanced the reputation of their

mother and father.

8. The king of Pañcāla brokered marriages for his sons, who

expanded the family lineage, as well as for his daughters, with suitable young heroes.

9. One hundred sons were begotten to each and every one of his sons, and, through them, the Paurañjana lineage prospered across Pañcāla.

10. Purañjana became attached to sense objects through a growing

attachment to his o spring, his inheritors, and his dependents,

treasury, and household.

11. Just like you, full of various desires, the king underwent consecration and then o ered sacri ces to the gods, forefathers, and

lords of beings. These sacri ces were horri c due to the massacre of

animals they involved.

12. Then Time, which is not dear to those who hold women dear,

approached the king, whose mind was attached to his family, and

forgetful of his actual [spiritual] obligations.

13. There was a gandharva king called Chaṇḍavega (having impetuous speed). That powerful king had three hundred and sixty

gandharva warriors.

14. He had a similar number of gandharva females, black and white, who were their consorts. They surrounded the city, which had been

engineered so as to ful ll all desires, and plundered it.

15. When those followers of Chaṇḍavega began to besiege the city

of Purañjana, the serpent Prajāgara (one who stays awake) resisted

them.

16. He was the powerful superintendent of Purañjana's fort, and battled single-handedly for one hundred years with the seven

hundred and twenty gandharvas.

17. But this ally was alone in his ght with many. When he began to

weaken, Purañjana and his relatives fell into great anxiety, and so

did the citizens of the city.

18. But, imbibing liquor and under the control of women, and

seizing tribute from his citizens, the king refused to entertain fear in that Pañcāla stronghold.

19. Meanwhile, O King Prācīnabarhiṣat, there was a certain daughter of Time who desired a husband. She wandered around the

three worlds, but no one welcomed her.

20. Because of her personal bad luck, she was known in the world as

Durbhagā (the unlucky one). Previously, accepted by the sage-king

descendant of Puru, she had bestowed a boon upon him."79

Book IV, Chapter 28

1. The king of the yavanas was named Bhaya (fear). His soldiers also roamed about the earth along with the daughter of Time,

accompanied by the king's brother, Prajvāra (fever).

2. One day, they violently attacked the city of Purañjana, which was

replete with material pleasures. It was still guarded by the serpent

protector, but he had by now become old.

3. The daughter of Time invaded that city of Purañjana by force. A

person overwhelmed by her immediately nds himself bereft of

vitality.

4. While it was being ravaged by the daughter of Time, the yavana

soldiers entered through the gates with great force and poured

through all parts of the city from all directions.

5. While she was harassing the city, the proud Purañjana, attached

to his family and a icted with the false sense of "my-ness," 80

experienced all sorts of intense su erings.

6. The unfortunate fellow's mind was attached to sense pleasures, and his higher discrimination had been destroyed. Assailed by the

daughter of Time, he became bereft of beauty and all his riches were seized by force by the gandharva and yavana soldiers.

7. Purañjana saw that his city had been destroyed, and that his sons,

grandsons, followers, and ministers had lost their respect and had become antagonistic. Moreover, he saw that his wife had lost her a ection for him.

8. Purañjana saw the Pañcāla kingdom invaded by enemies. Finding himself in the grasp of the daughter of Time, and overwhelmed by

immeasurable anxiety, he could not nd a solution to the situation.

9. Caressing his wife and sons, the wretched fellow still craved for

sense pleasures, even though these had become useless to him

because of the daughter of Time. His interest in the destination of

his ātman had long been lost.

10. The king began to abandon the city, even though he did not wish to do so. It had been overrun by the gandharvas and yavanas and devastated by the daughter of Time.

11. Then Prajvāra (fever), the elder brother of Bhaya (fear), arrived

there. Desiring to please his brother, he burned down the entire city.

12. As the city was burning, the head of the household with his wife, followers, and goods, along with the citizens, were all

tormented.

13. The house of Prajāgara, the city's protector, had been seized by

the yavanas, and he himself had been consumed by Prajvāra (fever).

When the city was overwhelmed by the daughter of Time, he was

sorely tormented.

14. Unable to defend the city and under great stress, the serpent Prajāgara trembled intensely, desiring to abandon it, like a snake the hollow of a tree on re.

15. Seized by the gandharvas and assailed by the inimical yavanas, the king's limbs became weak, and he cried out.

16.–17. The unfortunate fellow was a householder whose mind was

xed on domestic a airs. He had embraced the notion of "I" and

"mine" toward his daughters, sons, grandchildren, daughters-in-law,

attendants, and whatever remained of his property in the form of palace, treasury, and possessions. When the time for separation from

his wife arrived, he thought: 18. "When I have departed to the other

world, how will the mistress of the house survive, deprived of her

lord and lamenting for her sons?

19. Unless I had eaten, she would not take her meal; if I had not bathed, she would not bathe before me; if I was displeased, she became very alarmed; and if I was abusive, she remained silent.

20. She enlightened me when I was in ignorance, and she was

immersed in sorrow when I had to travel abroad. Even though she

has heroes as sons, [without me] she will not wish [to continue] this

path of the householder.

21. How will my poor sons and helpless daughters survive when I

am gone? It will be like being on an ocean without a boat [for them].”

22. As the king was lamenting with his pitiful intelligence in this way, even though he should have known better, the one known as

Bhaya (fear) made up his mind to seize him, and drew near.

23. As he was being dragged away by the yavanas like an animal to his fate, the king’s followers ran after him, greatly aggrieved and lamenting.

24. At this, the serpent, who had already been seized, abandoned the city and followed him. The city was then destroyed and returned

to the elements.

25. As he was being dragged away by the powerful yavanas, the king was overcome by tamas and could not even remember who had

previously been his friends and well-wishers in the past.

26. Those sacri cial beasts that had formerly been slaughtered by him without mercy, now sliced him with their axes in anger,

remembering the carnage he had in icted upon them.

27. Immersed in boundless tamas, the king’s memory became erased. He then experienced su ering for unlimited years as a result

of being corrupted by his attachment to women.

28. Due to his attachment to his wife in his mind [at the moment of

death], in his next life Purañjana became a beautiful maiden in the

palace of Rājasiṃha of the Vidarbha kingdom.81

29. The Pāṇḍya king Malayadhvaja, conqueror of many cities, after defeating other kings in battle, took this maiden [called Vaidarbhī]

as wife as a tribute to his heroism.

30. He begot in her a dark-eyed daughter, and seven younger

brothers who became kings of the southern lands.

[…]

33. The sage-king Malayadhvaja divided the land among his sons, and then, desiring to worship Kṛṣṇa, went to the Kulācala

mountains.

34. The ravishing-eyed daughter of the Vidarbha king's name was Vaidarbhī. Renouncing palaces, sons, and pleasures, she followed

the Pāṇḍya king, just as moonlight follows the moon.

35.–36. The rivers named Candravasā, Tāmraparṇī, and Vaṭodakā

ow in that place. Cleansing himself on both levels (physical and mental) with the sacred waters of those rivers, Malayadhvaja

performed austerities (tapas). He subsisted on bulbs, fruit kernels, roots, fruits, leaves, grass, and water. This gradually emaciated his

body.

37. Seeing everything with equal vision, the king transcended

dualities—summer and winter, wind and rain, hunger and thirst,

friend and foe, happiness and distress, etc.

38. His passions burned by the cultivation of knowledge and

austerity, he controlled his senses, breath and mind by following the

yogic restraints and observances (yamas and niyamas). He then united his ātman to Brahman.

39. He remained stationary in the same spot like a pillar for one hundred celestial years,82 focusing his attachment on Bhagavān Vāsudeva and nothing else.

40. Just like the witness of the emotions of a dream, he perceived

that the ātman within pervaded but yet was distinct from the body and mind: so he desisted from [identifying with] these.

41.–42. Through the pure lamp of knowledge radiating in all directions, the king could perceive the ātman in Brahman and Brahman in the ātman. This knowledge is imparted by Hari as guru in the form of instructions spoken directly by Bhagavān. 83 Then, after giving up even this ultimate perception, he desisted [from all mental activities].

43. Meanwhile, Vaidarbhī gave up all pleasures and lovingly served

her husband, Malayadhvaja, the knower of the ultimate dharma. 84

She considered her husband to be her Lord.

44. Her hair became matted, she wore rags and was emaciated from

fasting. In the company of her husband, she had become like a ame that becomes extinguished when the fuel is extinguished.

45. Not realizing that her beloved had given up [embodied

existence], she attended to him as before. He had been sitting completely motionless on his seat (āsana).

46. When she did not feel any warmth in his feet as she was massaging them, Vaidarbhī became terri ed, like a deer that has strayed from the herd.

47. Lamenting that she was now forsaken and without any

protection, she soaked her breasts with tears of despair and wailed

loudly in the forest: 48. "Get up, get up, O sage-king! You are supposed to protect this earth, with its ocean girdle, which is now

fearful of robbers and wayward warriors."

49. Lamenting in this way, the young girl, who had followed her husband into the forest, fell at the feet of her husband, crying and

shedding tears.

50. Grieving, she assembled a funeral pyre made of wood and

burned the body of her husband on it. She had made up her mind to

follow him in death by entering it.

51. Then, O master, some friend of hers from before—a brāhmaṇa

and knower of the ātman—[arrived there]. He comforted her with

sweet words as she was weeping, and spoke to her.

52. The brāhmaṇa said: "Who are you? Of whose lineage? And who is that lying there for whom you mourn? Don't you know me as your friend with whom you previously used to roam about?

53. O friend! Perhaps you remember your friend called Avijñāta, the

unknown one [of IV.25.10]? Attached to worldly pleasure, you

abandoned me and left seeking some other destination.

54. We were swans [pure ātman], you and I, O noble lady, and our place of refuge was the Mānasa lake. There passed a period of one

thousand years when we were without home.

55. You were that swan. You abandoned me, O friend, and set out

for the earth, your mind set on worldly pleasures. There you saw a

place built by some woman.

56. It had ve pleasure groves, nine gates, one protector, three surrounding walls, six families, ve marketplaces, ve materials,

and was governed by a woman.

57. The pleasure groves [in the analogy] are the objects of the senses, and the nine gates are the [ori ces of the body for the functioning of the] life airs (prāṇa), O master. The surrounding walls are re, water, and food; and the families are the collection of the six senses.

58. The marketplaces are the connotative organs (kriyāśakti),85 and the ve materials are the imperishable elements (the mahābhūtas of earth, water, re, air, and ether). The governor is the intelligence. 86

Once a person enters that place, he is no longer aware [of the real

self].

59. In uenced by an attractive woman, you enjoyed in that place,

and gave up your memory [as to your real self]. Because of that association, you have attained this miserable state, O master.

60. You are not the daughter of Vidarbha, and this hero is not your

real well-wisher. Nor were you the husband of Purañjanī [in your

past life] by whom you were trapped in the city of nine gates.

61. It is by māyā illusion that you think that man [in your past life, Purañjana] is this chaste woman [that you are now, Vaidarbhī]. You

are neither. We are swans [the ātman]. 87 Please [try to] perceive our real nature.

62. I am you—you are no one else. And see too how you are me.

The wise do not see even the slightest di erence between us at all. 88

63. Just as a person beholds the one self as having become two in

the re ection of a mirror or an eye, such is the di erence between

us." 89

64. In this way, the swan was enlightened by the other swan of the

Mānasa lake and regained his memory, which had been lost because

of deviating from his original true nature.

65. O Prācīnabarhiṣat! This spiritual teaching has been taught to you in an allegorical manner because Bhagavān, the Lord of the Universe, likes to remain beyond the senses.

Book IV, Chapter 29

1. Prācīnabarhiṣat said: "O Lord! We do not understand your words

clearly. The sage-poets understand them, but not us, who are

bewildered by ritualism (karma)."

2. Nārada said: "[In the allegory] one should understand Purañjana

to be the puruṣa (ātman). He builds for himself the city (i.e., a body), which has one, or two, or three or four feet, many feet, or no feet at

all.90

3. The person referred to as Avijñāta, ‘the unknown one,’ is Īśvara, the friend of that puruṣa. He cannot be known by people through mundane names, qualities, or actions.

4. Desiring to enjoy the guṇas of prakṛti in their entirety, the puruṣa decided that from all the forms, the one with two hands and feet and nine gates was undoubtedly the best.

5. One should interpret the woman as being the intelligence

(buddhi), which creates the notion of ‘I’ and ‘my.’ Using the

intelligence, a person enjoys the guṇas in this body through the eye, etc.

6. The male companions are the group of senses that produce

knowledge and action (the jñānendriyas and karmendriyas),91 and the female companions are their activities. The serpent is prāṇa, which has ve functions.92

7. Know that the greatly powerful one (the eleventh attendant) is the mind. He is the leader of both sets of senses. The Pañcālas are the ve sense objects, in the midst of which is the city of nine gates.

8. The pairs of gates are the two eyes, the two nostrils, the two ears,

the mouth, the genitals, and the anus. [Prāṇa] goes out through these to the sense object connected with each respective gate.

9. The two eyes, two nostrils, and mouth are the ve gates placed in

the front (the east). The right ear is the southern gate, and the left

ear is the northern gate.

10. The two lower gates, the penis and anus, have been spoken of as

the western gates. The two eyes, Khadyotā and Āvirmukhī, have

been built in one location. Through these, the master of the eyes (the puruṣa) experiences Vibhrājita, which is form and color.

11. Nalinī and Nālinī are the two nostrils, and smell has been called

Saurabha. The sense of smell is Avadhūta; Mukhya is the mouth; Vipaṇa, speech; and Rasavid (Rasajñā), taste.

12. In the allegory, Āpaṇa is [speech associated with] everyday a airs and Bahūdana the varieties of foodstu s. Pitṛhū is known as

the right ear and Devahū the left ear.

13. The lands of the Pañcālas are the [two types of] scriptures, one of which teaches the path of material activity and the other the path

of renunciation. With the help of Śrutadhara, the ears, one can proceed to the realm of the forefathers, or the realm of the gods

[depending on the scriptures one listens to and follows].93

14. [In the allegory,] Āsurī is the penis and [Grāmaka] the

attachment of common folk to sex. Durmada is said to be the sexual

act, and the rectum has been called Nirṛti.

15. Vaiśasa is hell. Lubdhaka is the anus. Now hear from me about

the two blind ones: they are the hands and feet. By utilizing them, a

person can go about and perform actions.

16. The inner quarters are the heart, and the mind is that which was

called Viṣūci (Viṣūcīna). According to the mind's states, one experiences illusion, peace, and joy in the heart.

17. Due to being instigated by the guṇas, the mind is transformed [during sleep], or transforms itself [when awake], into various states. The ātman, although a witness [and never subject to transformation], identi es with those same states caused by the guṇas.

18. The chariot is the body and the horses are the senses. Although motionless, its movement is the passage of the year. The wheels are the two types of karma (good and bad), and the banners are the three guṇas. The tethers are the ve life airs (prāṇas).

19. The rein is the mind, and the charioteer is the intelligence. [94] The chariot seat is the heart. The ve carriage boxes are the ve objects of the senses, and the seven chariot bumpers are the seven bodily constituents (dhātus: lymph, blood, esh, fat, bone, marrow, semen).

20. The ve types of external movements are the ve organs of actions. With these, one runs after mirages. The army consists of the eleven senses (the ve knowledge acquiring senses, the ve organs of action and the mind) and one takes pleasure from ve kinds of slaughter. Caṇḍavega is the year, by whom Time is demarcated.

21. His gandharva warriors are the days, and the gandharva females, the nights. They steal away one's life span by their three hundred

and sixty steps.

22. Kālakanyā, whom people do not welcome, is old age in person.

The king of the yavanas is Death. He adopted Kālakanyā as his sister for the purpose of destruction.

23. His roaming yavana soldiers are mental anxieties and illnesses.

Prajvāra is fever. It is of two kinds: quick and intense (hot and cold), which are the blight of living beings.

24. In this way, the embodied puruṣa, enveloped in tamas in the body, is made to su er for a hundred years through many types of

su ering: from the environment, from other living entities, and from

one's own mind and body. 95

25. Although it is without qualities, the puruṣa thinks that the qualities of the mind, senses, and life airs are within itself. Therefore it lies [within the body] full of desire, and performs actions

thinking, 'I am this' and 'that is mine.'96

26. Although it is [capable] of seeing its own true nature, when the

puruṣa neglects Bhagavān, the supreme guru, it becomes addicted to the guṇas of prakṛti.

27. Thinking itself to be a product of the guṇas, the puruṣa then acts helplessly, and is consequently reborn [in a particular kind of body]

according to whether its actions were white (sattva), black (tamas), or red (rajas). 97

28. Sometimes, as a result of performing white actions, he is born

into the celestial realms full of light. At other times, [owing to the

performance of red actions], he experiences struggles born of activity, which result in unhappiness; and at other times again [owing to the performance of black action], he experiences immense grief.

29. His intelligence is covered [as to his real nature], in accordance with his mind and the qualities of his actions, and so he sometimes attains the state of a celestial, sometimes of a human, and sometimes of an animal, either as a male, a female or, sometimes, as neither.

30.–31. Just like a wretched dog wanders around tormented by hunger and obtains either [a beating with] a stick or cooked rice [to eat] in accordance with its destiny, so, in the same, way, the embodied soul (jīva), its mind full of desire, traveling on paths that are either high (righteous) or low (nonrighteous), attains either agreeable or disagreeable results in high, middle, or low destinations in accordance with destiny.

32. There is no remedy for the jīva being subject to one of the su erings. These are caused by either its own mind and body, or other living entities, or the environment. And even if there were a remedy, the remedy itself would soon be counteracted [by some other su ering].

33. Any counteraction is of the nature of a person carrying a heavy

burden on his head, who then places it on his shoulder [thereby merely shifting the pain from one place to another].

34. O sinless king! Mere action cannot completely counteract

another action, just as a dream cannot counteract a dream—both

are permeated by ignorance.

35. Even though its reality does not actually exist, saṁsāra does not just cease—just as [the unreal experience] of a person roaming

about in dream through the medium of the subtle body does not cease [until awakening].

36. Saṁsāra is the continued cycle of ignorance of a living being who in reality is ātman. The remedy is supreme bhakti to the guru.

37. When yoga is directed exclusively to Vāsudeva, Bhagavān, then renunciation and knowledge awaken.

38. Then bhakti will manifest for a faithful person absorbed in the narratives (kathā) of Acyuta, and always hearing and contemplating them, O sage-king.

39. Bhakti is found wherever there are bhāgavata devotees, O king.

The bhāgavatas are saints who eagerly hear and recite the narratives and qualities of Bhagavān with pure hearts and minds.

40. In that association, rivers of the nectar of Viṣṇu's narrations recited by the great souls ow everywhere. Those who imbibe these

with inundated ears without getting satiated are never a ected by illusion, sorrow, fear, or hunger, O king.

41. But the world of embodied beings (jīvas), constantly harassed by those su erings, is not attracted to the ocean of nectar of Hari's narrations.

42.–44. Even up to this very day, Śiva, Lord of the mountain, who is

Bhagavān himself; Manu; Brahmā; Dakṣa and other progenitors; the lifelong Kumāra celibates headed by Sanaka; Marīci; Atri; Aṅgirā; Pulastya; Kratu; Bhṛgu; Vasiṣṭha; and other such [great sages and divine] beings including I myself cannot see the all-seeing supreme Īśvara, even though we see [many otherwise inaccessible things]

through our tapas, wisdom, and samādhi states and we are masters of sacred speech and expounders of the Veda.

45. Those who follow the profound and extensive Vedic sacred texts

worship the limited celestial gods in accordance with the

prescriptions outlined in the sacred hymns. But such people do not

know the Supreme.

46. When Bhagavān, who is cherished in the heart of a person, favors that person, then he or she is able to detach the mind, both

from the ritualism of the Vedas and from the world.

47. Therefore, O Prācīnabarhiṣat, do not look upon ritualistic

actions as being real, even though they have the semblance of

reality. They make contact with the ear [as enticing Vedic

prescriptions], but do not make contact with the actual Truth.

48. Those whose intelligence is clouded proclaim that the Vedas are

all about ritualistic acts. 98 They do not understand the Veda. They do not know that personal realm of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Janārdana).

49. You have covered this entire earth globe with the sacred darbha

grass facing east [as per the Vedic prescriptions] and have become proud and arrogant, slaughtering many animals. You do not know the higher type of action. That which is for the satisfaction of Hari is [true] action, and the mind xed on Him is [true] knowledge.

50. Hari is the soul of all embodied beings. He is the Īśvara of prakṛti. Taking refuge of His feet is the [true] bene t for people in this world.

51. It is He who is the soul, the most beloved One. By taking refuge in Him, one does not experience even the slightest fear. The one who knows this is the learned one. Such a learned one is Hari in the form of the guru."

52. Nārada said: "So, Your question has been dealt with, O best of men. Now please listen to me while I tell you a con dential truth.

53. Consider a deer, its ears enchanted by the sounds of a swarm of bees, excited after mating, and wandering about in a secluded spot full of owers. But, while grazing on some insigni cant [grass], it remains ignorant of the bloodthirsty wolves ahead of it, and the arrow of the hunter that has been discharged at it from behind.

54. O king, you should see your own self as that deer! The secluded spot is the refuge of women, whose nature is like the owers. After copulating, your mind is absorbed in them. You seek a tiny bit of happiness—the fruit of ritualistic acts performed out of greed—but

this happiness is most insigni cant like the [eeting] fragrance and nectar in owers. Your ears are completely seduced by the very gratifying words of people—especially women—which are like the sounds reverberated by the swarms of bees. Yet you do not re ect on the small components of time, which bring an end to the days and nights, consuming your life like the pack of wolves. The hunter following you unnoticed from behind as you enjoy in your residences is Death, who nally pierces your heart with an arrow.

55. You are that deer. After considering your own behavior to be like that of the deer, control the [outward] ow of your sense of hearing by your mind, and your mind internally by your heart.

Renounce schemes for illicit liaisons that take place in the abodes of women, and please Kṛṣṇa instead. He is the refuge of the swanlike devotees. Gradually desist [from materialistic hankerings].”

56. The king said:

“O brāhmaṇa! I have heard and taken to heart all that your honor has spoken. My own preceptors did not know all this, as, otherwise, had they known, why did they not disclose it?

57. You have cleared a major doubt of mine in this matter that was created by them. Even the sages are bewildered when it comes to that which lies beyond the realm of the senses.

58. In this world, a person relinquishes the body with which he or

she engages in action, but experiences the consequences of those actions in another body in the next life.

59. This doctrine of the knowers of the Vedas [about karma] is accepted everywhere: a prescribed act that is performed is invisible;

its [consequence] cannot be seen."

60. Nārada replied: "The person by whom an act is performed

through the subtle body of the mind is the very same one who experiences its [consequence] in the next world. One is not

separated from the consequences [because of death]. 99

61. This is just like when a man leaves his living body when sleeping [in dream], and enjoys through a similar or di erent

[dream] body the [seeds of] action that had previously been

deposited in the mind [when awake].100

62. A person who mentally says, 'I am such and such, and that person is this and that, and these [children] are mine,'101 receives whatever karma is produced [from his actions]. It is as a result of this that there is rebirth.

63. Just as someone's state of mind can be inferred by both the activities and aspirations of that person, so in the same way, the actions performed in a previous life can be inferred from a person's

present states of mind (citta-vṛtti).

64. Something that has never been anywhere experienced, heard, or seen in one birth might yet appear in the mind if an impression of

that thing is imprinted on the mind [from a previous birth].102

65. Therefore, O king, you should be aware that an unfamiliar mental image occurring to a person in one body corresponds to [the past-life imprint of that experience recorded] in the subtle body, for the mind is not able to conjure up an object that has never been experienced.

66. The mind reveals the past births of a person, as well as what will come to be and what will not come to be in the future. Blessings upon you!

67. Sometimes, something that has never been seen or heard in this life is experienced in the mind. Whatever this thing might be, it can be inferred that it is based on [something that has been experienced in a di erent] place, time, and situation. [103]

68. All objects of perception enter the mind sequentially, in groups, and then depart. Everyone is born with a mind [which has been retained with its impressions over countless births].

69. When the mind is exclusively established in sattva, absorbed in the presence of Bhagavān, then this universe is revealed by that presence. It then shines forth in full manifestation, just like [the sun is revealed] by an eclipse of the moon.

70. This conglomeration of guṇas, sense objects, senses, mind, and intelligence [that is, embodied existence] remains in force perpetually, for as long as this notion of 'I' and 'mine' is not given up by a person.

71. This awareness of ‘I’ is not manifest in deep sleep, swoon, intense pain, in the state of death and fever, nor in the interruption

of the movement of breath (prāṇāyāma).

72. The subtle body does not manifest as fully in the embryo or in

childhood, as it does in youth, because it is then only partially

manifest, just as the moon does not manifest as fully when it is a new moon.

73. Although objects do not actually exist, saṁsāra does not cease for one contemplating sense objects, just as is the case with objects

in dreams [for one still dreaming], even though they are unreal.

74. In fact, the subtle body consists of ve parts (the ve prāṇas), [104]

three coverings (the guṇas), and sixteen expansions (the ten cognitive and conative organs and the mind). When this subtle body

is connected with consciousness, it is called jīva.

75. It is through the subtle body that the puruṣa receives and relinquishes bodies, and it is through the subtle body that he experiences joy, grief, fear, su ering, and happiness.

76.–77. It is the mind that is the cause of saṁsāra, O best of men!

Just as a caterpillar does not leave [its footing on one leaf] and proceed on [until it has a secure footing on another leaf], [105] so a person does not relinquish self-identi cation with the previous

body, even while in the actual process of dying, until the karmas

[associated with the previous body] have completely nished and

he or she attains another body.

78. For as long as one remains contemplating [the objects of the senses] and pursuing them through the senses, one accumulates

karma. And as long as there is karma, one remains enmeshed in ignorance and the actions of the non-self (the mind and body).

79. Thus, in order to counteract all this, worship Hari with all your

being, realizing this universe to be identical with Him, and that its

creation, maintenance, and destruction are all due to Him."

80. Maitreya said:

“The noble Nārada, best of the Bhāgavata devotees, revealed the destination of the swanlike devotees to this king. He then returned

to Siddha-loka, the realm of the perfected yogīs.

81. The sage-king Prācīnabarhī instructed his sons in the protection

of the citizens, and then departed for Kapila āśrama to perform austerities (tapas).

82. There, freed from all attachments, worshipping the lotus feet of

Govinda with concentrated mind and devotion (bhakti), the hero attained the state of liberation which bestows the same form as the

Lord (sarūpya). 106

83. O Vidura, One who hears or causes others to hear this spiritual

allegory of the celestial sage Nārada is freed from the subtle body.

84. It was delivered from the mouth of the celestial sage, and cleanses the mind, purifying the worlds with the glories of

Mukunda. Anyone who hears it narrated attains the supreme

destination. Freed from all bondage, that person no longer wanders

about in saṁsāra.

85. I studied this wonderful spiritual allegory. Through it the question about a person’s householder life has clearly been dealt with.”

Book V

The Teachings of the Ṛṣabha Incarnation: The Ascetic as Madman

Yoga Blueprint *This narrative, like others, emphasizes again the illusory nature of sensual pleasures and family happiness. The passage stresses the importance of devoting at least the last years of life to renunciation and the pursuit of higher truths. Of interest here is the preeminence given to the brāhmaṇa caste, but what is especially noteworthy in this regard is the Bhāgavata's expectations pertaining to the quali cations of the true brāhmaṇas that make them respectworthy in the rst place in 5.24–25.*

The setting of the passage is Ṛṣabha about to renounce his kingdom and leave for the forest. He enthrones his eldest son, Bhārata, and requests his other sons to cooperate with their elder brother. Here we nd him delivering parting spiritual teachings to them all.

Book V, Chapter 5

1. Ṛṣabha said: "My dear sons! This body possessed by embodied beings in the world of men is not meant to be used for pleasures,

which create so much trouble, and which are available to stool-eaters [such as hogs]. It is meant for divine austerities. By

performing these, one puri es the mind, and one attains the eternal

bliss of Brahman.

2. The sages say that service to the great souls is the door to liberation. Keeping company with those who are attached to women

in contrast is the door to tamas. The great-souled ones are those who

are equanimous, peaceful, devoid of anger, a good friend [to all], and righteous.

3. Their goal in life is to establish love for Me, the Lord, not [to seek the company of] people who are attached to children, wife, and home, and are

only occupied with maintaining the body. Such

people take no pleasure in anything beyond whatever is necessary to

maintain the body.

4. Indeed, that person who seeks ful llment in the satisfaction of the

senses is constantly bewildered, and engages in bad karma. I do not consider this mind-set wise, as this body, even though temporary, is

the very thing which bestows su ering on the ātman.

5. Ignorance remains present for as long as there is no

understanding of the Supreme; consequently, one does not inquire

into the nature of the ātman. And as long as there is action [in pursuit of ful lling desire], the mind remains absorbed in karma, and, consequently, is bound to a body.

6. Due to the soul being enveloped by ignorance in this manner, the

mind functions, bound by karma. But one is not freed from being bound by the body for as long as love for Me, Vāsudeva, does not

develop.

7. Even if one is learned, for as long as one is deluded about one's

real self-interest and cannot see that endeavors performed under the

in uence of the guṇas never end up as had been anticipated, one's

[higher] memory is lost. Consequently, a fool pursues a home and

sex life, but nds only su ering instead.

8. This attraction to sex indulgence between a man and a woman,

the wise say, is the knot in the heart that binds them. From this, comes this illusion of 'I' and 'mine,' which takes the form of a person's home, property, o spring, and the acquisition of ample

resources.

9. When a sober person loosens the bondage of karma stemming from this knot in the heart in the form of the mind, and when he has

turned his back on this [desire for sex and the like], then he has transcended its cause. At this point one is liberated and attains the

Supreme.

10.–13. An intelligent person, endowed with resolution,

perseverance, and sattva, should remove the characteristic known as the ego. This can be accomplished through the following ways:

obeying Me, the supreme swanlike guru, with love; becoming free of desire; tolerating the dualities [of the world]; understanding the su ering of beings everywhere; inquiring into Truth; austerity;

renouncing ambition; performing activities for Me; constant

narrations about Me; associating with those who have Me as their

Lord; glorifying My qualities; being free of enmity; equanimity; peacefulness; desiring to remove the understanding of the self as body and homestead; study of the sacred texts whose subject matter

is the ātman; living in solitude; control of the mind, senses, and life breath; faith in Truth; undeviating celibacy; attentiveness; control of

speech; perceiving my presence everywhere; knowledge illuminated

with wisdom; and the practice of yoga.

14. With diligence, by means of this yoga practiced as indicated above, one should completely sever the bonds of the knot in the heart produced by ignorance. This knot is the reservoir of all karma.

Once this is accomplished, one can desist from yoga.

15. The king and the teacher who are desirous of attaining My abode, and whose goal of life is My grace, should teach all this to

their sons and disciples who do not know it, without getting

impatient. They should not engage those who are bewildered by

karma to perform more acts of karma. What bene t does a human being gain by causing one whose vision is lost to be engaged in karma, and thereby causing that person to fall farther into the abyss (of saṁsāra)?

16. One intent on ful lling desires, who strives after material objects, is a person whose vision is lost as to his own personal true

bene t. Creating enmity with others for the sake of a little happiness, a fool does not see the endless su ering [this engenders].

17. What learned person, who is compassionate and personally

knows the Truth, upon seeing a person of limited understanding

immersed in ignorance, would again direct that person, who is like a

blind man, back on the wrong path?

18. One should not be a guru, one should not be a relative, one should not be a father, one should not be a mother, one should not

be a celestial being, and one should not be a husband, if one cannot

liberate [one's dependents] from involvement with the process of death (saṁsāra).

19. This body of Mine is hard to comprehend; 1 indeed, sattva is My heart and it is there that dharma resides. Adharma has been relegated to a long distance behind me. Therefore, the Āryas call me

Ṛṣabha (best of beings).

20. You have all been born from My heart. Therefore, serve the noble Bharata, who has been born from the same womb as you,

with uncontaminated (akliṣṭa) mind. Doing this will constitute

service and support for the population.2

21. Among created beings, creeping creatures (like snakes) are

higher than plants; higher than these are those who are endowed with intelligence; higher than those are human beings; higher than

them are the pramatha demons; higher than these, the gandharva celestials; next in the hierarchy are the siddha, perfected beings; and then come the attendants of the gods [such as the kinnaras].

22. The celestials, whose chief is Indra, are higher than the asura demons, and greater than these is Dakṣa and the sons of Brahmā.

Śiva, the son of Brahmā is greater still. Śiva holds Me to be the supreme and, although I am the supreme Lord, I Myself hold the brāhmaṇas to be My lords.

23. I do not nd any other being comparable to the brāhmaṇas, so what else could I consider superior? Whatever is o ered to a

brāhmaṇa by people with faith, I eat with relish—but this is not the case with [the oblations o ered] in the Vedic agni-hotra re ritual. 3

24. It is the brāhmaṇas who have transmitted My ancient glorious body in the form of the Vedas. They are manifest sattva, the highest pure quality, along with peacefulness, discipline, truthfulness,

compassion, austerity, tolerance, and realization of Truth.4

25. The brāhmaṇas engage in My devotion and, although they are destitute, [they do not seek anything from Me], even though I am

unlimited, completely supreme, and the bestower of the celestial realms as well as of liberation. So what would they possibly seek from anywhere else?

26. O sons! With a pure mind, you should consider all creatures, whether moving or non-moving, to be worthy of respect due to

being the abodes of Me in person. This, in truth, is the o ering that

is to be made to Me.

27. My worship consists of directly o ering the activities of sight,

words, and mind to Me. Without doing this, a person is not able to

free him or herself from the great illusion, in the form of the bonds

of death.

28. For the bene t of instructing society at large, the completely realized and magnanimous paramahaṁsa Bhagavān Ṛṣabha

instructed His sons in this way, even though they themselves were

highly educated. Then, for the great sages whose nature is peaceful,

and who have desisted from all ego-based activity, He taught the dharma of the paramahaṁsa (topmost swanlike devotees). This dharma is characterized by detachment and by knowledge in bhakti.

After this, He consecrated the eldest of His hundred sons, Bharata,

for the governance of the world. Bharata was dedicated to the

devotees of Bhagavān and he, too, was a topmost Bhāgavata devotee.

Ṛṣabha Himself then renounced his home, retaining possession of

only His body. He then internalized the sacred āhavanīya sacri cial re within Himself, 5 and wandered forth from Brahmāvarta, the land

of Brahman, like a madman, His hair disheveled, and with only the air as His clothing.

29. In the garb of an avadhūta (extreme ascetic), Ṛṣabha acted like a blind, dumb, deaf, stupid, and insane person. Since He had taken a

vow of silence, He remained silent even when addressed by people.

30. He wandered about the earth traveling alone. Wherever He went

—towns, villages, mines, elds, parks, mountain villages, army

encampments, cowpens, herdsmen stations, merchant caravan sites,

mountains, forests, and hermitages, etc.—He was surrounded along

the way by the lowest of men, like a forest elephant surrounded by

ies. He ignored their insults; farts; hurling of dust, stones, and feces; spitting, urinating, beatings, and derision. His mind was never

disturbed by displaying any pride of 'I' and 'my,' since He was situated in His own glory, His own true nature. Realizing both the

real and the nonreal, He perceived this body, which is referred to

as real, to actually be an unreal form.

31. He was an extremely handsome young man: His hands, feet,

chest, long arms, shoulders, throat, face, limbs, and other bodily parts were [beautifully] composed. His face had a spontaneous

smile, and was naturally attractive. His charming wide eyes were reddish and cooling, like fresh full-blown lotuses, and His nose, throat, ears, and forehead were perfect and delicate. His cheerful face and discreet smile cast Cupid, the holder of the ower bow, into the minds of the ladies in town. With His mass of brown, matted and curly hair hanging down, and His body dirty like that of an avadhūta ascetic, He appeared as if possessed by a demon.

32. Whenever Bhagavān Ṛṣabha saw that this world was antagonistic toward his type of yoga, He nonetheless considered compromising it to be unacceptable. He took the python vow: lying down, He ate, drank, chewed, urinated, and evacuated [in the same place], rolling His limbs around until His body was smeared in feces.

33. Yet the fragrant aroma of His sweet-smelling feces percolated that region for a distance of ten yojanas in all directions with a

pleasant smell.6

34. In this way, adopting the behavior of a crow, deer, or cow while

wandering about, standing, sitting or lying, He drank, ate, and urinated in the manner of crows, deer, and cows.

35. Bhagavān Ṛṣabha, the Lord of liberation, exempli ed in this way the various behaviors of yoga. He experienced supreme absolute uninterrupted bliss in Bhagavān, Vāsudeva, who exists in the hearts of all creatures as the ātman. Because in His mind there was oneness and no separation or di erence between Himself and that ātman, He was fully endowed with the attainment of all the siddhi mystic powers. These are the mystic powers of yoga attained spontaneously, such as ying through the air, [moving] at the speed of mind, disappearing, entering into the bodies of others, grasping things from afar, etc. 7 But, O king, He did not actually welcome these in His heart."

Book V, Chapter 6

1. King Parīkṣit said: "But the mystic powers are attained

spontaneously when the seeds of karma are burned up by the knowledge manifesting from the practice of yoga, O Lord. Surely they ought not to again become disturbances [to the path: so why

did Ṛṣabha renounce them?]!” [8]

2. Sage Śuka replied: “What you have said is true. Nevertheless, some [sages] never place faith in the ckle mind here in this world

—just as a wicked kirāta hunter [does not place faith in a captured deer not escaping]!

3. Therefore it is said:

‘One should never make friends with the ckle mind. From trusting it, the tapas, austerity, practiced for a long time by great Lords [such as Śiva and Saubhari[9], was lost.

4. For the yogī who has made friends with it, the mind always creates a space for lust and the other enemies that follow it [anger

and so on], just like a husband’s wife who goes with other men.

5. Lust, anger, pride, greed, sorrow, illusion, and fear are the bonds

of karma, and they have the mind as their root. So what sensible person would accept the mind [as trustworthy]?

6. Thus, although He was the topmost of all the lords of the universe, the majesty of Bhagavān Ṛṣabha went unnoticed due to His behavior, speech, and garb of an avadhūta ascetic, which appeared like those of a simpleton. Perceiving with perfect internal vision that the ātman was non-di erent from the [Supreme] Ātman, and desiring to abandon His own body and so teach to yogīs the method of leaving the body, He gave up identi cation with His body.

7. Bhagavān Ṛṣabha was freed from identi cation with His subtle body, but His body continued to wander about this earth with a semblance of ego, due to vāsanas, memory imprints, caused by

yogamāyā. 10 He haphazardly traversed the regions of Koṅka, Veṅka, and Kuṭaka, and the regions of South Karṇāṭaka and arrived at a forest on the Kuṭaka mountain. He placed a stone in his mouth like

a madman, and, naked and with scattered hair, roamed about there.

8. Then, a erce forest re broke out from the friction of the bamboos, which spread by the force of the wind. Engul ng that

forest, it burned it up along with Ṛṣabha.

[…]

15. Which other yogī even in his imagination could follow the example set by the birthless Ṛṣabha? The yogī desires the powers of yoga, which were discarded by Ṛṣabha because they pertain to the realm of the unreal,11 even though they endeavored [to present themselves to Him].

16. Thus has been narrated the spotless story of Bhagavān by name of Ṛṣabha, the supreme guru of all cows, brāhmaṇas, celestials, worlds, and Vedas. This account contains the highest and ultimate

auspiciousness and puri es all the bad actions performed by people.

Exclusive bhakti for Bhagavān, Vāsudeva, develops in both the one who hears and the one who recites this story attentively with

growing faith.

17. It is in bhakti that sages continually immerse their minds, which are otherwise constantly tormented by the su erings of saṁsāra with its various vices. Because of the insurmountable bliss of bhakti, they have no interest even in nal liberation, which is the supreme goal of life. 12 Liberation anyway manifests itself [as a by-product of bhakti], so all goals are ful lled by dint of devotion to Bhagavān.

18. O king! Bhagavān Mukunda is the Lord, guru, beloved deity, lineage master, and sometimes servant of you and the Yadu dynasty.

Howsoever that may be, my dear one, He sometimes awards mukti,

liberation, to those who worship Him, but not bhakti yoga.

19. Ṛṣabha's desires were extinguished, since He had attained

experience of His own eternal self. Out of kindness, He explained about the realm of the ātman, which is free from fear, to people of the world whose intelligence has been asleep for so long, due to

[indulging in] fantasies of unreality [that is, taking the body to be

the self]. Reverence to him, Bhagavān Ṛṣabha."

The Tale of King Bharata: The Mind at the Moment of Death

Yoga Blueprint *There are a number of yogic elements in the story of King Bharata. The rst, underpinning the cultural context of the Bhāgavata , re ects the Vedic notion that individuals are ideally expected to go through four stages of life (āśramas), each lasting twenty-ve years. The rst of these is brahmacarya , celibate studentship; 13 the second gṛhastha, householder; 14 the third, vānaprastha , forest dweller; 15 the fourth and nal stage, sannyāsa , full ascetic renunciant.*

As we will nd in the story of King Bharata, in the last stages, a person severs all attachment to home, hearth, and family and devotes the remaining years of life to cultivating yoga practices, performing austerities, and meditating in solitude. Additionally, the sacred texts advise one to undertake such practices in a holy place, where, in addition to worldly distractions being minimized, the atmosphere is pervaded by associations with divinity, as we will encounter in our story.

The main yoga lesson of the story, expressed in chapter 8, is the principle that the state of one's mind at the moment of death determines one's next life. In the Bhagavad Gītā (VIII.6), Kṛṣṇa states: "Whatever state of being one remembers when one leaves the body at the end of life, is the very state one will attain in the next life." Since he allowed himself to become excessively attached to a young fawn to the point where he became consumed with thinking about it constantly, Bharata's mind was absorbed in thought of the fawn when Death came to claim him, and thus his mind and consciousness were transferred into the body of a deer in his next life.

There are, of course, other variables that feed into determining one's next birth, as outlined in the Yoga Sūtras II.12–14, such as the pious and impious deeds performed in life, which, in Bharata's story, quali ed his next births, granting him the boon of remembering the cause of his condition. Consequently, in his last birth, he exhibited the full symptoms of complete detachment from all things material, as expressed in Yoga Sūtras I.15–16. A

further feature in this nal life illustrates a foundational principle of bhakti : divinity can personally transubstantiate and manifest through material elements, such as the deity, as will be found in this story.

Book V, Chapter 7

1. Śri Śuka said: "Bharata, the great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, was dedicated to ruling the earth. When he was deliberating on how to

govern it [on the orders of his father] Bhagavān Rṣabhadeva, he took as his wife, Pañcajanī, the daughter of Viśvarūpa.

[…]

3. This continent was [previously] named Ajanābham, but since the

time of Bharata, they designated it 'Bhārata.'[16]

4. Bharata, the Lord of the earth, had vast knowledge. Following his

own dharma (duty), he governed the citizens with great a ection,

just as his father and grandfather had done. They, in turn, were following their own respective duties.

[…]

8. He enjoyed in this way for ten million years, at which time he

perceived that the appropriate moment for extinguishing his karma

[had arrived]. At this point, he divided among his sons his personal

wealth, bestowed by his father and grandfather, according to the norms of inheritance. He then set out from his home, the abode of

all kinds of opulence, to the holy place Pulaha.

9. Actually, even today, out of a ection, Lord Hari appears to His

devotees who reside there in that place, in whatever form they desire.

[…]

11. Bharata lived alone in the grove around that place known as Pulaha-āśrama. He dedicated himself to the worship of Lord Viṣṇu with varieties of owers, shoots, tulsi leaves, and water, and with o erings of bulbs, roots, and fruits.17 Detached from desires for sense objects, he cultivated peacefulness of mind and attained ultimate bliss.

12. By such uninterrupted worship of the Supreme Being, Bharata became calm and his heart melted from the surge of his growing love for God. All the hair on his body was seen to stand on end due

to the force of his ecstasy, and his vision became obstructed by tears

of a ection caused by his contemplation.18 His intelligence was absorbed in his heart, 19 which was like a deep lake over owing with supreme bliss from his devotional practices of ever increasing

meditation on the red lotuslike feet of his beloved Lord. In this state, he even sometimes forgot the very service to the Lord that he was

supposed to be performing."

Book V, Chapter 8

1. Śrī Śuka said: "Once, after nishing his customary duties and taking his bath in the great river, Bharata sat down on the water bank, reciting the sacred syllable oṁ for a period of three muhūrtas (two and a half hours).20 Oṁ is the Absolute Truth Brahman manifest as sound.21

2. Just then, O king, a deer arrived at that body of water at that spot, desiring to drink.

3. Just at the very moment that she was drinking the water, the erce sound of a lion's roar burst forth nearby, striking terror in all

creatures.

4. The doe was by nature timid. When she heard that sound, her heart immediately became alarmed, her thirst was pushed aside,

and her eyes became restless with trembling glances. Overwhelmed

by fear of the lion, she suddenly leaped up in terror.

5. The deer happened to be pregnant. The embryo, dislodged due to

her great fear, emerged from her womb and fell into the waters.

6. Separated from her herd, and traumatized by exhaustion and fear,

as well as by the leap and the birth, the black doe then dropped down dead in some cave.

7. The kingly sage Bharat saw that the deer's o spring had been discharged by its parent and was being helplessly carried away by

the current. So, with the compassion of a well-wishing soul, he lifted

it out and took it to his āśrama hermitage, understanding that it was motherless.

8. Indeed, Bharata became personally extremely attached to the

deer's o spring. Because of his contemplating, petting, fondling, protecting, and nurturing it day by day, his spiritual practices—

adherence to the moral yama vows22 and worship of the Supreme Being, etc.—were discarded, one by one. Finally, after the passing of

some days, all of them were abandoned.

9. The king thought: 'Alas, this helpless o spring of a deer has been

separated from its friends and herd by the Lord's power of Time,

which is like an ever-moving chariot wheel. It has approached me for protection, and sees me as parent, brother, kinsman, and herd companion. It knows no one else and has full faith in me alone.

Therefore, since it has taken refuge of me, it is tting that I attend

to its petting, fondling, protection, and nurture. I am not callous, and I know the sin of neglecting one's dependents. 23

10. Surely those who are noble saintly Āryas, 24 peaceful in nature and benevolent to the helpless, sacri ce their own needs, even if they are very important, for a need such as this.'

11. In this way, Bharata became attached to the young deer while

eating, bathing, wandering about, sleeping, and sitting, and his heart became bound by a ection.

12. When he was about to go and collect kuśa grass, owers, leaves, fruits, roots, or water, he became apprehensive about the threat of

wolves and dogs [in his absence] and so he went into the forest accompanied by the young deer.

13. When, due to its simple nature, the deer became stuck here or

there on the trails, Bharata would carry it on his shoulder out of kindness, his heart burdened with excessive love. Similarly, he

would place it on his lap or chest and experienced great joy in petting it.

14. Even while he was in the middle of performing his religious rites, the emperor would get up midway and cast a glance at her. At

such times, his mind reassured, he prayed for blessings for the fawn,

saying: 'May there always be good fortune for you.'

15. At other times [when he could not see the fawn], he became like

a miser who had lost his wealth. Pining over the fawn because of his

a ection and compassion, his heart would become a icted with

distress from being separated from her. Overwhelmed with intense

anxiety, he then spoke as follows: 16. 'Oh alas! The helpless fawn,

o spring of a dead doe, placed her faith in me. I have done nothing

to merit this: on the contrary, I have the mentality of a deceitful

kirāta hunter. 25 Will it return and, like a noble person, disregard all this by trusting me again?

17. Will I see it again wandering tranquilly on the fresh grasses of

the gardens of this hermitage, under divine protection?

18. I hope that no wolf or wild dog or other such creature,

wandering about alone, devours it.

19. The sun, lord [of the heavens], which is the soul of the three

[Vedas]26 and which arises for the welfare of the entire world, is now setting, but the fawn has not returned. She was entrusted to me

by the doe.

20. Or perhaps the fawn princess will yet return, and bring me delight—driving away the pining of its well-wisher with its various

pleasing and attractive fawnlike frolics—even though I have done nothing to deserve this?

21. While it was playing, it would approach me in great alarm whenever I would close my eyes in a feigned state of samādhi meditation. On those

occasions, agitated with a ection, it would strike me with the tips of its horns, soft as water drops.

22. When the oblations for the re sacri ce that had been placed on

the sacred kuśa grass had been polluted [by it][27] and it was reproached by me, it became very frightened. It immediately

stopped its frolics, and remained with all of its senses restrained, like the son of a sage.'

[…]

26. With his heart bewildered by such unsustainable delusions

manifesting in the form of the fawn due to the force of his previous

karma,[28] Bharata abandoned his yogic practices, his performance of yogic austerities, and the speci cs of his worship of Bhagavān. How could this unnatural attachment to the fawn—a member of a

di erent species—become an obstacle like this for the sage-king

Bharata, who had taken up the practices of yoga? Bharata had already renounced even his own sons, as obstacles to his realization

of the Ultimate Truth, and they are so di cult to give up. But yet, he ended up neglecting his soul, ātman, due to his attachment to petting, pleasing, rearing, and nurturing that fawn. Finally,

unsurpassable Death in the form of Time, voracious and consuming,

appeared before him, like a snake before a mouse hole.

27. At that time, gazing at the deer who was lamenting at his side

like a son, his mind completely absorbed in the deer, Bharata left

this world, and with it the deer. He subsequently himself obtained

the body of a deer.29 However, along with losing the dead body, he did not lose the memory of this past life, as others do.

28. In that next birth, as a consequence of his previous e orts to worship God, Bharata was able to remember that he himself was the

cause of attaining that state as a deer.30 He lamented profusely: 29.

‘Alas, what misfortune! I have fallen from the path of those who have attained self-realization. I had taken refuge in a sacred forest

in solitude, had freed myself from all attachments, and had realized

my own ātman. For a long time my mind was completely and utterly absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, the inner Soul of all souls by means of the yogic practices of hearing about him, re ecting upon him, chanting his glories, worshipping Him, and remembering Him all the time in all possible ways. But I let that same mind again ow away after a fawn from some distant place. What a fool I am!’

30. In this way, his detachment from worldly objects concealed [by

his birth as a deer], Bharata left his mother deer and returned again

from Kālañjara to the āśrama of the sages Pulastya and Pulaha. It was a sacred place, where the sacred śālagrāma stone is found, 31 a place favored by groups of tranquil-minded sages.

31. Subsisting on dry leaves, grass, and plants, and with only his own ātman as companion, Bharata awaited Death in that place, very fearful of [developing] any attachments. Counting [the days until]

his deliverance from the karma that had caused this state of being a

deer, when the time came, he gave up his deer body, which was wet from bathing in the waters of that holy place.” 32

Book V, Chapter 9

1. There was a certain brāhmaṇa in the lineage of sage Aṅgirā. 33 He was endowed with the qualities of peacefulness, self-control,

austerity, the study and recitation of the Vedic texts, renunciation,

contentment, tolerance, humility, wisdom, non-enviousness,

knowledge of the self, and joyfulness. 34 He begot nine sons from his elder wife, all with his same qualities of learning, character, behavior, handsomeness, and magnanimity. And in his younger

wife, twins were born.

2. One of these was a male. They say that he was Bharata, best of

the sage-kings, an exalted devotee of the Lord, who had given up the body of a deer and taken birth in a brāhmaṇa family as his nal birth.

3. In that birth, too, he was very fearful of attachments to his kinsmen. So he xed his mind on the lotus feet of the Lord, who destroys the bonds of karma, engaging in hearing, remembering, and reciting His qualities. By the grace of the Lord, he remembered the series of his previous births, and so, always concerned about

obstacles to [the realization of] the ātman, he presented himself to the world as mad, stupid, blind, and deaf.

4. After his son had received the sacred thread of the twice-born, 35

the brāhmaṇa, his mind bound by love for his son, performed the sacred rites of passage for him culminating in the rite celebrating the completion of Vedic studies. This was in accordance with

custom; 36 after all, the training of the son is to be undertaken by the father. He also arranged for his son to be taught the rules pertaining

to cleanliness and mouthwashing, etc., and the rules of correct behavior, even though the son did not accept them.

5. Bharata, even in the very presence of his father, did not learn all this correctly. The father wanted to teach him the gāyatrī mantra, beginning with oṁ (praṇāva) and containing the words bhūr, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ,37 but even over a period spanning the spring and summer months, he could only make Bharata grasp it incorrectly.

6. In this way, the father's mind was absorbed in a ection for his

son, whom he considered to be his very self, and he clung to the illusory notion that Bharata had to be educated. So he taught his son

all the duties of the graduating Vedic student (brahmacārya)—

cleanliness, study, the taking of vows, regulatory principles, and service to the guru and sacred re, etc. But his hopes remained unrealized in all that time, as Bharata did not apply himself to them.

Then the brāhmaṇa himself, forgetful [of his own ātman self] due to his attachment to his household, was taken away from his home by

Time, which is never forgetful.

7. Thereupon, the chaste younger wife, entrusting the twins to her

co-wife, herself went to the realm of her husband by following him. 38

8. After the father had passed away, the other brothers desisted from the obligations of instructing their brother Bharata, thinking him to be dull-witted. Their sphere of understanding was limited to

the ritualistic knowledge of the three Vedas,39 not the higher knowledge of the Self, and so they were ignorant of Bharata's

greatness.

9. When vulgar, beastly people called him names such as "mad,"

"dull-wit," "deaf," or "dumb," Bharata responded with behavior in

accordance with their expectations. When he was made to work by the will of others, he worked. He ate whatever food came his way—whether from forced labor, or as wages, or by begging, or by Fate, and irrespective of whether it was a large or small amount, tasty or spoiled—but he never did so motivated by the grati cation of the senses. He had gained mastery over his own ātman, which is blissfully experienced, pure, perfect in its own right, and untouched by cause and e ect (the law of karma). He never identi ed himself as being the body in its experiences of happiness and distress, which are caused by the dualities. [40]

10. Bharata wandered about with only his buttocks covered with a loincloth, without covering his body in heat or cold, wind or rain. He was built like a bull, solid in limb and muscular. His Brahman e ulgence, like a precious gem, was covered over by dirt from lying down on the ground and from not washing or massaging. With his sacred Brahman thread black from grime, he was considered "fallen, a brāhmaṇa in name only" by those who did not know who he really was.

11. When he was put to work even by his own brothers in eld labor, he did it, but he was not aware of whether [the ground he was given to clear] was even or uneven, excessive or inadequate. When he sought food from others as wages for such work, he would

eat a single grain, or an oil cake, or husk or rotten grain, or even the sediment left in the pot after cooking, and other such things, as if

they were nectar.

12. As it happened, one day, the leader of a band of thugs, desiring

a son, was about to o er a man as sacri cial beast to the Goddess

Bhadrakālī. 41

13. After this sacri cial "beast" by chance escaped, the chief's followers, who were pursuing him but unable to nd their quarry—

it being midnight and covered in darkness—espied Bharata, by the

unexpected hand of Fate. That descendant of the distinguished

Aṅgirā lineage was standing guard, protecting the elds from deer

and boars.

14. After evaluating Bharata's perfect [physical] qualities, the thugs

bound him with ropes, thinking he would accomplish their master's

task, and joyfully brought him back to Kālī's (Caṇḍikā's) temple, their faces beaming with joy.

15. The thugs then fed him, anointed him in accordance with their rites, dressed him in fresh cloth, and made him ready with

ornaments, ointments, garlands, sacred clay, and so forth. Then they

brought the human sacri cial animal before Goddess Bhadrakālī, to

the accompaniment of the sounds of cymbals, drums, hymns, and

songs, along with o erings of incense, lights, garlands, parched grains, shoots, sprouts, and fruit, in accordance with the

prescriptions for a great sacri cial slaughter.

16. Then, the leader of the thugs, about to propitiate Goddess Bhadrakālī with the sacri ce of blood wine from the human beast,

took up a terrible sword, which had been sharpened and

consecrated for the occasion.

17. As is evident, the nature of these thugs was rājasic and tāmasic42

— their minds had become proud from the passion of possessing wealth. They delighted in violence, and had willfully taken the unrighteous path, contemptuous toward the foremost (brāhmaṇa) caste, who are rays of God. The Goddess Bhadrakālī saw this extremely cruel act against Bharata, who was self-realized, without

enemies, a well-wisher to all beings, and the direct descendant of a

brāhmaṇa sage (Aṅgiras). Such an act had no sanction or support [in sacred scripture]. Just at the last moment, She suddenly burst forth

[from the deity] in a scorching form, intolerable to bear due to its

Brahman potency.

18. She burst forth, as if desiring to destroy the world. Her terrifying face had swollen red eyes and eyebrows like curved arches

quivering with the force of the intense rage and intolerance that possessed Her. Then, with that very same sacri cial sword, She

severed the heads of those sinful evildoers. Furiously emitting a resounding laugh, She drank the hot blood wine pouring out of the

thugs' necks with her companions. 43 Staggering with the intoxication of excessive drinking, She sang raucously with Her

associates, danced, and sported playfully with their heads as balls.

19. In this way, the o ense of directing black rites against great souls completely rebounds back on the performer.

20. O King Parīkṣit, devotee of Viṣṇu, it is not, in actual fact, so amazing that Bharata remained unperturbed, even when his head

was about to be severed. How can any fear exist for the supreme devotees of Hari (paramahaṁsas), 44 who are freed from the extremely tight knot in the heart caused by misidentifying the true

ātman self with the body? They are the well-wishers of all living beings, without enmity, and have taken refuge at the Lord's lotus feet. So they are protected in all such situations by Bhagavān Himself in the form of His ever vigilant weapon of Time.

The Teachings to King Rahūgaṇa: The Illusion of Social Status

Yoga Blueprint *The main yogic teachings imparted in this section focus on the illusory nature of social status and, of course, bodily identi cation in general. Of interest in the story is the great care Bharata took not to step on insects, re ecting the extreme sensitivity of enlightened saints to not in icting violence on other creatures, even ants on the road. This principle of ahiṁsā is the very rst of the yamas, which are the rst of the limbs of yoga. It is thus the rst step on the yogic journey and considered nonnegotiable by the yoga tradition (Yoga Sūtras II.31). Finally, the passage sends out a warning of not o ending saints, even if they are wandering among us unbeknownst!*

Book V, Chapter 10

1. Śri Śuka said: "One day, as Rahūgaṇa, the ruler of the Sindhu and Sauvīra kingdoms, was traveling along the banks of the Ikṣumatī

river [to the āśrama of Kapila], Bharata, best of the brāhmaṇas, was spotted by chance by the chief of the king's palanquin bearers, who happened to be seeking a bearer at that time. Considering Bharata to be stout, young, of solid limbs, and capable of carrying a burden like a cow or an ass, he brought him back. So Bharata was seized, like the other bearers who had been pressed into forced labor before him, even though he did not deserve such treatment. But that great soul just carried the palanquin.

2. Bharata was looking carefully ahead for the distance of an arrow [so as to avoid stepping on any insects]. When his stride was no longer in step with that of the other men, Rahūgaṇa noticed that the palanquin's motion was uneven and yelled to the men carrying the palanquin: 'Hey bearers! What is this? Walk properly! Carry the vehicle evenly.'

3. At this, hearing the chastising words of their master, the bearers' minds became fearful of punishment. So they informed the king as follows: 4. 'It is not us who are being careless, O lord of men. We are carrying the palanquin properly in accordance with your instruction. It is this person here who is not walking quickly, although he was just employed fresh today. We are not able to carry the palanquin evenly with him.'

5. After hearing the words of the poor fellows, Rahūgaṇa realized

that the irregular [motion] of one person linked with others

obviously creates irregularity with all those who are connected with

him. Although he had served his elders [and so should have known

better], his anger was somewhat aroused by the force of his kingly

nature. His mind overcome by rajas, he [sarcastically] addressed Bharata, whose Brahman potency was concealed, like a re [covered by ashes]: 6. 'Hey, brother! This is obviously a major inconvenience

[for you]. The path is long and you have been carrying the load all

alone for a long time as these other co-workers are not behaving as

friends. You are not very stout, nor are your limbs solid, and you are

assailed by old age.' Although he was sarcastically insulted in this

way, Bharata continued carrying the palanquin silently as before.

He had never projected the false notion of 'I' and 'mine' on this worthless body—which was to be his last. The body is, after all, just

a residence created because of ignorance [of the true ātman self]. It is made speci c [to each embodied being] by the guṇas out of material substances in accordance with saṁskāras and karma.45

7. Then, after some time, when the movement of the palanquin

again became disrupted, Rahūgaṇa, furious, exclaimed: 'Hey! What

is going on? You have disobeyed my order. By disregarding me, you

are as good as dead. I will teach you a lesson so that you will regain your senses, you deranged fool, just as Yama, the god of death with

rod in hand, in icts on the people in general.'

8. Although the king spoke in this uncontrolled way, he considered

himself to be learned. Thinking himself lord of men, due to

arrogance born of rajas and tamas, he had in the past rebuked all those who were devotees of Bhagavān. Bharata was a supremely powerful brāhmaṇa. He had realized his Brahman nature as ātman and was the dear friend of all beings. Half smiling, he spoke to the king, who was not very familiar with the behavior of perfected yogis.

9. The brāhmaṇa replied: 'What you have said is not sarcastic but in fact would be true, O hero, if, in fact, there were in reality a burden

borne by me a bearer, and if there were indeed a path to be walked

by me a walker [but, in reality, I am an ātman and thus have nothing to do with such things]. However, the wise do not talk about such qualities as "stout," pertaining to the body.

[The brāhmaṇa here and in the following verses deconstructs from the perspective of yogic wisdom each of the phrases the king had just uttered, in order to enlighten him.]

10. Stoutness, thinness, disease, anxiety, hunger, thirst, fear,

quarrel, desire, old age, sleep, attachment, anger, ego, illusion, grief

—these all apply to one who is born with a body; they do not apply

to me [the ātman].

11. [With regard to your comment about being "as good as dead"],

you are correct, it is in fact seen that all created things have a beginning and an end. And if the relationship between master and

servant were forever xed, O honorable king, then it would indeed

be appropriate to speak of "obeying an order."

12. We do not nd the slightest grounds for the notion of any real

di erence [between king and servant], other than what is assigned

by social convention. Therefore, who is really a "ruler"? And what is really "servitude"? Nevertheless, despite all this, O king, tell us: What can we do for you?

13. What would be the bene t of your "remedy" for me, O hero, if,

in fact, I have attained my true ātman self but am only acting like a mad, deranged fool? And if, on the other hand, I actually really am

a mad dullard, then your "remedy" will be like grinding the already

ground [a waste of time].'

14. In this manner, Bharata, the best of the sages, responded by redirecting the king's statements back to him. His demeanor was calm, as ignorance—the root cause of forgetfulness of the ātman—

had ceased to a ect him. Thereafter, he continued carrying the

king's vehicle as before, wishing to nish up his stock of activated

karma by accepting this task as its fruits. 46

15. The Pāṇḍu king, lord of the Sindhu and Sauvīra kingdoms, heard

these words of the brāhmaṇa. They were in accordance with all the sacred texts on yoga and had the potency to cut through the knot [of ignorance] in the heart. Despite what had just transpired, because of

his genuine faith, he hastily got down and touched his head at Bharata's feet, begging forgiveness, his kingly pride evaporated. The

king at this point became fully quali ed to inquire into Truth. He

said: 16. 'You bear the sacred thread of the twice-born brāhmaṇas—

so who are you, who wander about in disguise? Are you some ascetic renunciant? Whose son are you? From where have you come here, and for what purpose? If it is to uplift us, then are you perhaps the sage Kapila Himself?

17. I do not fear the thunderbolt of the king of the gods, Indra; nor the trident of the three-eyed God, Lord Śiva; nor the rod of Yama, god of death; nor the weapons of the gods of re (Agni), sun (Sūrya), moon (Chandra), nor wind (Vāyu); nor the treasurer of the Gods (Kuvera). But I greatly fear o ending the brāhmaṇa caste.

18. You have no attachments and roam about like a dullard with the extraordinary potency of your wisdom remaining concealed. Please explain your words, which deal with yogic concepts—they are incomprehensible to my mind.

19. I am traveling [on pilgrimage] to ask Kapila this question: "What is the refuge [for those su ering] in his world?" Kapila is the ultimate guru of the sages who know the truth about the ātman. He is the Lord of yogīs. He is Lord Hari [Viṣṇu] Himself, incarnating His quality of knowledge in the form of Kapila. [47]

20. Is it possible, good sir, that you are none other than He, Kapila? He wanders around, His true characteristics concealed, observing the condition of the world. How can someone whose spiritual intelligence is blind and who is bound up with attachments to

hearth and home, understand the ways of the Lords of yoga?

21. [Responding to Bharata's comments in verse 9:] It is well-known

that fatigue is experienced by someone engaged in work, and so I

infer that fatigue must be experienced by you, good sir, walking along carrying a burden. The ways of conventional reality must at

least be acknowledged as really existing on some level, since it is

not possible to fetch nonexistent water in a nonexistent pot.48

22. From heat applied to the cooking pot, the water inside is heated.

From the heat applied to that water in turn, the grains of rice within

become cooked. In the same way, saṁsāra ultimately does a ect the ātman, since the ātman is after all bound by saṁsāra through its connection with the mind, life airs, senses, and body.

23. A king, who is a protector and ruler of the citizens, if he be a

servant of God, does not "grind the ground" [as you claimed]. By

striving to perform his duties as worship of Kṛṣṇa, he is released from masses of sinful karma.

24. Good sir, I have humiliated an exceptional saint due to my arrogance in thinking I am a lord of men. Please bless me with a

favorable glance of compassion so that I might be absolved of the sin of o ending a saint. You are the well-wisher of the lowly.

25. You may be undisturbed [by all this], since you are completely

free from pride, and are the dearmost friend of the world. But someone like me, even if I be Lord Śiva, the bearer of the trident,

will perish very quickly because of the o ense I have performed against a great soul.’”

Book V, Chapter 11

1. The brāhmaṇa (Bharata) said: “You would not be considered noteworthy in the company of those who are really learned because

you are not wise, even though you are trying to speak the type of

words spoken by the wise. Those who are sages, in their re ections

on Truth, do not speak in the way you have about mundane

relationships [as between king and subject].

2. Along the same lines, O king, a pure saint free from desire, who is

a knower of Truth, usually does not take any satisfaction in the rhetoric of the ritualistic portions of the Veda, even though these give the appearance of great knowledge by presenting abundant

information on elaborate householder rituals.49

3. But, for one who does not come to the conclusion that the

[ephemeral] happiness of the householder should be renounced

voluntarily, just like a dream, not even the wisest Vedic words [the

Upaniṣads]50 are su cient for realizing the direct experience of the Truth of the self.

4. As long as a person’s mind is untamed and overwhelmed by

sattva, rajas, and tamas, it produces merit and demerit—good and bad karma—because of the desires of the mind.

5. The mind is lled with past-life memory impressions (vāsanās51).

It is pervaded by desires for sense objects. It is subject to the ow of the guṇas, and it is always undergoing change [because of desires and the like]. It is chief among the sixteen categories of Sāṅkhya

(the ve working senses, ve knowledge-acquiring senses, and the ve gross elements that constitute the makeup of material bodies). 52

Taking on di erent forms [in saṁsāra] with di erent names [man,

beast, bird, and so on], some high, some low, the mind manifests in

di erent bodies.

6. This mind, which is a creation of māyā (illusion), envelops the ātman with which it is associated. In due course of time, it causes the experience of the fruits of action in the form of intense happiness and distress and all the shades that lie between them. It is the cause of the illusion of the cycle of birth and death.

7. For as long as this mind exists, conventional reality (saṁsāra) remains manifest and ongoing, and the ātman (kṣetra-jña) is subject to the experience of gross and subtle bodily forms. It is because of

this that the wise say that this mind is the cause both of lower experience under the in uence of the guṇas, as well as of higher existence, liberation, the state beyond the in uence of the guṇas. 53

8. If the mind is in uenced by the guṇas, it leads the living beings to calamity. If it transcends the guṇas, it leads to liberation. It is just like a lamp, which emits a smoky ame when it is consuming its ghee wick, but otherwise [once it has burned up all the ghee] enjoys its own nature [burning purely]. In the same manner, when the

mind takes recourse to its various states, vṛttis, it is bound by karma and the guṇas, but when it does not, it resorts to its own true nature.

9. The mind has eleven vṛttis: ve related to the knowledge-acquiring senses, ve related to the working senses, and one related

to the ego. They say that these vṛttis have eleven elds of activity: the ve organs of action, the ve sense objects, and the ego. 54

10. Smell, form, touch, taste, and sound—the objects of the

knowledge-acquiring senses—and evacuation, sexual intercourse,

locomotion, speech, and grasping—the functions of the working

senses—along with accepting the body as 'mine' (the ego) are the eleven. But some say this sense of 'I' is the twelfth.

11. These eleven functions of the mind multiply into hundreds and thousands and millions [of derivative states] in accordance with Time, karma, latent saṁskāras, nature, and speci c material objects.

But they do not exist for themselves, or for each other: they exist for

the sake of the ātman. 55

12. The kṣetra-jña, although pure, witnesses these never ending states of the mind, which are sometimes manifest, and sometimes unmanifest [as in deep sleep]. The mind is created by māyā as a covering of the jīva soul, and is an impure agent [subject to ignorance and the like].56

13. There is a [supreme] kṣetra-jña, who is an ātman and a puruṣa.

He is primordial, unborn, self-luminous, directly experienced, and Lord of all. He is known as Nārāyāṇa, Bhagavān, Vāsudeva. He controls through his māyā power, from within the ātman.57

14. Just as air, after entering within all moving and non-moving entities, controls them from within in the form of breath, so does the Supreme, Bhagavān, Vāsudeva, the Supreme Ātman, and Kṣetra-jña (knower of the eld of prakṛti), enter into this world.

15. O Lord of men, as long as an embodied being has not shaken o

this māyā by means of awakening knowledge, has not conquered the six enemies [noted in the next verse] and become free of all

attachment, and has not realized the true nature of the ātman, he or she must wander in this world of saṁsāra.

16. Such a person continues wandering in saṁsāra until he or she realizes that the mind, which masquerades as the self, plants the seeds of su ering in saṁsāra. It causes enmity, greed, desire, disease, illusion, and sorrow. It is the creator of the sense of ownership, the ego.

17. With diligence, defeat this enemy of the mind with the weapon

of the worship of the lotus feet of Hari, the supreme guru. This mind is extremely powerful, and has become stronger by neglect. It is an

impostor, and presents itself as if it were the true self."

Book V, Chapter 12

1. Rahūgaṇa said: "Homage, homage to You. Your [ultimate] form is

the cause of the universe and yet Your [present] form minimizes Your real nature. 58 Homage to You, O renunciant. Your eternal realization is concealed under the guise of a fallen brāhmaṇa.

2. My vision has been poisoned by the serpent of pride in this foul

body, O brāhmaṇa. Your words are a nectarlike remedy for me. They are just like powerful medicine for someone who is a icted by the

fever of a disease, or ice water for one scorched by the heat of the

summer.

3. Later, I shall raise a question pertaining to a doubt that I have,

good sir. For now, please explain to me, in a manner that is easy to

understand, that which You previously spoke about on the subject of

the yoga of the highest self. My mind is eager to hear.

4. O Lord of yoga, You said that the relationship between apparent cause [bearing the palanquin] and e ect [fatigue] is only based on

conventional reality, but that this relationship is not easily

defensible when an inquiry into [higher] reality is conducted. My mind is bewildered in this matter, sir.”

5. The brāhmaṇa replied: “This thing known as a ‘person’ is nothing other than something made out of earth walking upon the earth—a

thing made of earth due to whatever cause. On top of the two feet of

this thing are ankles, calves, knees, thighs, waist, neck, and

shoulders.

6. On top of these shoulders sits a wooden palanquin, and inside that, one who is known as ‘the king of the Sauvīra.’ He, sir, is pervaded by arrogance; blinded by pride, he thinks: ‘I am the king

of the Sindhus.’

7. Forcing these pitiful people, who are already a icted by extreme

hardships, into compulsory labor while boasting that ‘I am the

protector of the people,’ you are in fact without pity. You would not

make a favorable impression in an assembly of the wise.

8. We know that the beginning and end of all moving and non-moving entities is always just the earth—anything else is simply a

label that is assigned based on convention. Let it be demonstrated if

[any other cause] can be inferred from [observing] the true nature

of reality.

9. In the same manner, the existence of that which is denoted by the

word 'earth,' in turn, can be understood as unreal, because from the

dissolution of earth, what remains are subatomic particles. 59 It is only when these atoms combine that speci c things [such as earth]

are formed. But atoms, too, are conjectured by the mind out of ignorance [of ultimate reality].

10. You should understand anything else—thin and fat, small and big, real and unreal, animate and inanimate—in the same manner.

Anything in the realm of dualities is [in its essence] made of prakṛti under the labels: of substance, nature, the subconscious mind, Time,

and karma.60

11. Knowledge is Brahman: it is pure, the supreme goal of life, one, undivided, without any inside or outside, Truth, complete, the

innermost, and peaceful. It is known by the name Bhagavān and the sages know it as Vāsudeva.61

12. O Rahūgaṇa, this knowledge is not attained by penances, the performance of ritual sacri ces, the o ering of libations, the

ful lling of household duties, the chanting of Vedic mantras, or by extreme austerities involving water, re, and sun.62 It is only attainable from the dust of the feet of the great devotees. 63

13. Among such souls, discussion of the qualities of Viṣṇu, whose glories are praiseworthy, are relished, and mundane topics are

avoided. By cultivating these discussions daily, the pure mind of the

seeker of liberation becomes inclined toward Vāsudeva.

14. I too was previously a king by name of Bharata. I had attained

liberation from the bondage of attachments to all material things, whether experienced or heard about.64 Although engaging in the

worship of Bhagavān, due to attachment to a deer I became a deer, and my goal was ruined.

15. Because of the potency ensuing from my worship of Kṛṣṇa, the

memory of my previous life was not lost even in the deer's body, O

hero. Therefore, now, being fearful [of attachments] I avoid the company of people, and wander about in disguise.

16. Therefore a person should destroy illusion here in this world with the sword of knowledge produced from the association of those

who are detached from all attachments. Having regained one's

memory of God, by hearing and speaking about the glories of His

activities, one attains the supreme destination."

[Bharata's teachings are continued in the next chapter in the Allegory of the Forest.]

The Allegory of the Forest: The Illusion of Family Life

Yoga Blueprint *Bharata continues to instruct the king, using the story of a caravan lost in a forest to portray the ultimate impossibility of attaining satisfaction and ful llment in family a airs and the pursuit of happiness through material ambitions, a consistent theme in the Bhāgavata . As with the story of Purañjana, this is an allegory. The interpretation of the various elements presented in this chapter are explained in the next chapter.*

Book V, Chapter 13

1. The brāhmaṇa [Bharata] said: “Seeking activities that vary according to the qualities of sattva, rajas, and tamas, a caravan of merchants is made by māyā to follow a trail that is very di cult to traverse. Wandering about pursuing the goal of wealth, it enters a forest; but it nds no happiness there.

2. In that forest, there are six robbers, O lord of men. They forcefully plunder the merchant caravan, which is led by an evil leader. Jackals there steal away the foolish merchants, like wolves a

sheep.

3. In that forest, dense with abundant thickets, grasses, and

creepers, the merchant caravan is harassed by intense mosquito

bites. Sometimes it sees a city of the celestial gandharvas [an illusory castle in the sky] and other times demons that appear like fast-motion rebrands.

4. With the intention of [appropriating] wealth, water, and

residences for themselves, the members of the caravan run here and

there in the forest. Sometimes, the caravan’s vision is covered by dust and obscured by grit stirred up by storms, and it cannot determine its direction.

5. Its members’ ears are pained by the sound of invisible crickets,

and their minds are deeply distressed by the hoots of owls. A icted

by hunger, the caravan resorts to inauspicious trees65 [that provide no fruit], and sometimes, it chases after water that is a mirage.

6. Sometimes it approaches riverbeds, but they are depleted of

water, or else, when bereft of food, begs from others. At other times,

it encounters a forest re and is tormented by the ames, or it becomes desperate and is deprived of life by the yakṣas.66

7. Sometimes, the caravan's possessions are seized by other

powerful men, and the minds of its members are plunged into

despair. At such times, lamenting and falling into delusion, they faint. At other times, the caravan enters into the city of the celestial gandharvas [a castle in the sky] and enjoys for a moment like someone who is happy.

8. The merchants' minds become distraught when they wish to

climb a mountain but their feet [are pained] by gravel and thorns as

they are walking along. Tormented at every step by the inner re of

hunger, the householder erupts into anger against his own family.

9. Sometimes a person is swallowed by a boa constrictor, and in complete confusion is left discarded in the forest. He lies down, and

is bitten by snakes. Then, bereft of sight, he falls into a blind well of dense darkness.

10. Sometimes, seeking some meager enjoyment such as honey, the

caravan is assailed by bees and becomes completely frustrated. And

if its goal in that endeavor is attained with great di culties, others then forcefully plunder that honey from it.

11. Sometimes the merchant caravan remains incapable of

counteracting cold, intense heat, wind, and rain. At other times, while trading something with others, its members end up

developing enmity because of cheating one another for money.

12. Sometimes, when money becomes scarce in that forest, and

when beds, seats, houses, and transportation become hard to come

by, the merchant caravan begs from others. But, eyeing the

possessions of these others, it is left with its desires unful lled, and receives humiliation instead.

13. As it wanders on this path distressed by money woes and great

di culties, relations of enmity develop because of reciprocal

monetary dealings with others, even as they intermarry.

14. The merchant caravan discards here and there those who are dead, and clutches tight those who are born. Even up to this day, O

hero, no one has returned from that forest, nor has anyone taken up

the practice of yoga, which leads to the highest goal.

15. Ambitious men, who have forged enmity with others, and

conquered the ends of the earth, thinking, 'Everything in the world

is mine,' do not attain to that place [the abode of Viṣṇu] once they

end up lying dead on the battle eld. Only one who has laid down

his rod of kingship and renounced enmity attains that place.

16. Sometimes the caravan clings for shelter to the arms of creepers,

desiring to hear the mu ed sounds of birds who nestle there.

Sometimes, being afraid of a pride of lions in some place, it establishes friendship with cranes, herons, and vultures.

17. Cheated by them, it enters into the company of swans, but then,

not nding their behavior pleasing, it approaches the monkeys. The

members of the monkey troupe gaze into each other's faces,

oblivious of the end of life [that looms], their senses grati ed by the

indulgences of that species.

18. As one member is about to enjoy in the trees, a ectionate to wives and sons, and emasculated by his attachment to them, he falls

into some mountain pit out of carelessness, depleted by sexual

indulgence. Grabbing hold of a creeper, he remains [suspended],

terri ed of an elephant.

19. Subsequently, if somehow he becomes freed from this calamity,

he once again enters into the company of the merchant caravan. No

person who has entered this path created by māyā and is wandering about on it knows [the ultimate Truth] even until this very day, O

conqueror of foes!

20. O Rahūgaṇa! You also are on this path! By renouncing your rod

of kingship, and making friends with all living entities, and with a

mind that has conquered illusion, take up the sword of knowledge

sharpened by service to Hari. Then you will cross over to the Ultimate Truth."

21. The king said:

“Aho! The human birth is the most excellent of all births. What good is there in other births—even in that other world, the celestial realm

—if there is not the plentiful association of great souls, whose minds

are puri ed by the glories of Hṛṣīkeśa [Viṣṇu]?

22. There is nothing to be amazed at in the fact that sins are destroyed and pure bhakti to Adhokṣaja [Viṣṇu] manifests from the dust of your lotus feet. My ignorance, which was rooted in false reasoning, has been dispelled by just a moment of your association.

23. May those brāhmaṇas who wander the kingdom in the garb of

avadhūta ascetics be blessed. Reverence to [such brāhmaṇas] who are elderly, reverence to those who are children, reverence to those

who are youths, and reverence to those who are boys.”

24. Śrī Śuka said: “The son of the brāhmaṇa sage was in the highest state of enlightenment. After he had instructed knowledge of the self

to the Sindhu king with great compassion, even though he had been

belittled by him, his feet were worshipped by Rahūgaṇa with

humility. He then wandered o about the earth, his mind free from

the waves of sensual attraction, like an ocean full to abundance.

25. The king of the Sindhus cast o the notion of the body as being

the self—a notion that is superimposed on the self by ignorance (avidyā). He had received the knowledge of the supreme self from a perfected being. This is the process of enlightenment for people who

have taken guidance from those who, in turn, have taken shelter of Bhagavān.”

26. The king said:

“O great devotee! This path of saṁsāra in the world of the jīvas that you have explained with great erudition is esoteric. The subject matter is allegorical and appropriate for learned Āryans—its

meaning cannot be understood easily by laymen. Since it is di cult

to interpret, kindly explain the symbolic meaning embedded in it.”

Book V, Chapter 14

[Interpretation of the elements of the allegory.]

1. Śuka said: “This world of jīvas is like the caravan of merchants [in the allegory] intent on wealth who have entered the forest of

saṁsāra—a most inauspicious place, like a burial ground. It is due to māyā, which functions under the control of Bhagavān, Īśvara, Viṣṇu, that the caravan has stumbled onto this path of saṁsāra, which is di cult to traverse, like an unpassable forest trail. The merchants subsequently experience the karma produced by their bodies. For those who think the body to be the self, the group of six senses are

like gates through which saṁsāra is experienced. This saṁsāra is

beginningless and consists of attaining and relinquishing a series of di ering bodies, which are produced by the performance of

auspicious and inauspicious deeds, themselves the products of the particular qualities of the guṇas of sattva, rajas, and tamas. Although the e orts of the merchants are fruitless and full of hardships, still,

even up until now, they do not attain the path that is followed by

the bees at the feet of Hari and the guru [the bhāgavatas]. It is this that brings peacefulness to the hardships of saṁsāra.

2. In that forest, those who go by the name of the six senses, are in

reality robbers. For whatever wealth is attained after much

di culty is really meant for the pursuit of dharma. And the wise declare that dharma is that which is conducive to the other world and characterized by the direct worship of the Supreme Person. But,

just like robbers plunder a caravan of merchants, [the senses] of a

misguided person of uncontrolled mind plunder that rightly earned

wealth for mundane sense enjoyment in the household, and through

plans and the pursuits of activities involving seeing, touching, hearing, tasting, and smelling.

3. In that forest, the household members, who are wives and

children by name, but wolves and jackals by deed, seize the wealth

of the miserly householder, even as he is watching and resisting,

[like wolves and jackals seize] the sheep in the allegory even though

it is being well protected.

4. Just as a eld, although it is plowed every year, becomes once

again like a thicket of plants, grass, and creepers by the time of sowing unless the seeds [of weeds and such] have been burned with

re, so, in the same way, the householder āśrama is a karma eld in which seeds of karma never disappear. The householder situation is a storehouse of karma.

5. Placed in that situation, the householder's wealth, which is like

his very life breath, is harassed by the mosquito stings of ill-bred men, and by the thieves of rats, birds, and locusts. Sometimes, with

mind in uenced by actions, desires, and ignorance, the householder wanders about on that forest path without attaining his goals, and,

in a state of illusion, looks upon the world of men as if he had attained the celestial city of the gandharvas.

6. There, lusty after pleasures such as drink, food, and sex, he chases

after sense objects, which are mirages.

7. Sometimes, just as one in distress desires re, a person whose mind is predominated by the guṇa of the same color (the red of rajas) wishes to gain gold. But gold is a kind of stool [that is, a by-product of re], and is the abode of unlimited evils.67

8. In this way, a person devoted to the various means of subsistence

such as home, beverages, wealth, and so on, sometimes runs around

here and there in this forest of saṁsāra.

9. At times, mounted upon the hips of a lusty woman, his eyes enveloped in rajas, he becomes obscured by the passion (rajas) of the moment, which is comparable to a whirlwind, and transgresses

moral behavior. His mind completely enveloped in rajas, he is not aware of the dig-devatā, the celestial beings who oversee all corners of the universe.

10. At other times, he suddenly gains realization of the falseness of

sense objects. But he then again loses his memory [of this

realization] due to considering himself to be something he is not

[that is, the body], and then once more chases after those same sense objects, which are like the water in a mirage.

11. Sometimes his heart and ears are tormented by the rebukes of government o cers and enemies, directly or through second parties. These are [delivered with] arrogance, harshness, and aggression, like the sounds of the owls and crickets [of the allegory].

12. Even though he himself is dying while living, when his pious karma from the past becomes diminished, he seeks recourse in the form of wealth from those who are also dead, though alive. But such wealth is devoid of value in both worlds[68] and so is like a poisonous well, or like impious [poisonous] trees and creepers such as the kāraskara and kākatuṇḍa [in the allegory].

13. Once in a while, his mind becomes corrupted by association with bad company, and he takes recourse of heretics. But this simply produces grief in both worlds [here and the hereafter], and is comparable to stumbling into a river that has no water.

14. When he cannot procure food for himself by means of causing distress for others, he then devours those who possess even a blade of grass belonging to his son or father—or he may devour even his son or father themselves.

15. And sometimes, approaching the home, which is devoid of desirable things and causes misery, like a forest re, he falls into a state of despair, and is scorched by the re of anguish.

16. At other times, when his wealth, which is his very life air, is seized by endish government o cials, who have become hostile

due to the workings of Time, he becomes like a corpse, deprived of

all signs of life.

17. Sometimes he experiences the type of happiness found in

dreams, and due to hallucinating, imagines his deceased father or grandfather to be present.

18. At other times, desiring to climb the enormous mountain of regulations dealing with the duties of the householder, his mind becomes attracted to mundane addictions. At such times, he

laments, as if entering a eld of thorns and gravel.

19. Sometimes, depleted of strength by the [gastric] re within his

body, he erupts into anger against his own family.

20. Seized by the boa constrictor of sleep, he becomes immersed in

the darkness of tamas, and lies like a corpse that has been discarded in a desolate forest [of the allegory], unaware of anything.

21. At other times, the teeth of his pride are broken by malignant

people, and he cannot attain a moment's sleep. His lucidity is

obscured by a disturbed heart, and he becomes like a blind person who has fallen into a dark well.

22. At any opportunity he searches for drops of honey in the form of

lust, taking someone else's wife or wealth. For this he is beaten by

the king or husband, and falls into a bottomless hell.

23. Actually, they say that the sowing of the seeds of saṁsāra for a person on this path, is karma of both types [pious and impious].69

24. If he is freed from bondage, Devadatta70 snatches away [the wife or wealth] from someone, and Viṣṇumitra does the same from him

in turn, and in this way these possessions remain transient.

25. Sometimes, incapable of warding o one's conditions of cold, wind, and other various adhidaivika and adhibhautika problems (caused by other living entities, or the environment), one sinks into

a depressed state of unlimited anxiety.

26. At times, in dealings among themselves, or if one takes away any money from another—even just a kākiṇi coin (farthing), or anything at all—one creates enmity, because of fraudulent business

dealings.

27. On this path there are obstacles such as happiness, distress, desire, aversion, fear, pride, delusion, madness, sorrow, illusion, greed, envy, jealousy, insult, hunger, thirst, anxieties, disease, birth, old age, death, and more.

28. At times, embraced by the creeperlike arms of a woman, who is

the divine māyā, a person's wisdom and discrimination spill away, and his heart becomes bewildered in e orts to create a pleasure house for her. Then his mind becomes captured by the behavior, glances, and words of his wife, daughters, and sons, who are attached to him for sustenance. Because his mind is uncontrolled, he

casts himself into a bottomless dark hell.

29. On occasion, his mind is terri ed by the discus of Īśvara, Viṣṇu, Bhagavān, known as the Time factor through its churnings. The units of Time begin with the smallest atom, etc., and end with the two

halves of Brahmā's life (dviparārdha).71 With great force, and without even blinking, Time snatches away the ages of all beings from Brahmā to the straw or clump of grass from under their very eyes. Contemptuous of Bhagavān himself, Īśvara, whose personal weapon is the wheel of Time, and who is the Supreme presiding Being of sacri ce, a person resorts to the gods of the heretics, who

are rejected by the unanimous opinion of the Āryans. These are analogous to the herons, vultures, cranes, and vaṭa birds [in the allegory].

30. If the person is cheated by those heretics, who have cheated their own selves, he resides with the brāhmaṇa caste. They engage in activities such as worshipping Bhagavān the Supreme enjoyer of sacri ce, following the activities prescribed in the Śruti and Smṛti sacred texts, 72 and undergoing the sacred thread ceremony for the twice-born. Not nding their character pleasing, he joins company with the śūdra caste. His absorption in thoughts of sex and the means of supporting the family is considered impure according to the codes of conduct of the sacred texts, like that of the monkey race [in the allegory].

31. There, too, the unfortunate minded person enjoys himself freely

and without restrictions, gazing into the faces of others and

indulging in vulgar activities, forgetful of his impending end

wrought by Time.

32. Sometimes, frolicking in the household, which, like the trees [in

the allegory], only contains objects of this world, he is enamored by

his sons and wife, and spends his time in sexual pursuits, like the

monkeys.

33. Bound to his path, he is trapped in darkness, analogous to the

cave in the mountain [of the allegory], by the fear of the elephant of

death.

34. At times, unable to counter the su erings of cold and wind and

the adhidaivika and adhyātmika miseries (caused by one's own body

and mind, or by the environment) in icted on him, he broods over endless sense objects.

35. Sometimes, whatever wealth he obtains in dealings among

others is through fraudulent business transactions.

36. At other times, when his wealth is depleted and he becomes deprived of objects of enjoyment such as beds, seats, foodstu s, etc.,

he resolves to seize by force the objects of his mind's desire that are

lacking.

37. In this way, due to the in uence of past life impressions (vāsanās), he again enters into fresh relationships of marriage with and separations from others, even though relations of enmity had previously been created with them on account of business transactions.

38. On this path of saṁsāra, a person is bound by various troubles and obstacles. Wherever he meets his death, the others abandon him

in that place. Holding tight to each newborn, one grieves, is

deluded, is afraid, quarrels, weeps, rejoices, sings, and is bound up

by life. No one has yet up to today returned to the place where the

caravan of worldly men initially began, a place avoided by the saintly in the rst place. It is also the place where the path ends, say the wise. 73

39. He does not take to the path of yoga, or attain that place which the sages, who have renounced violence, whose natures are

peaceful, and whose minds are controlled, attain.

40. Although sage-kings sponsored great sacri ces and conquered

all the corners of the earth, they leave it behind when they

themselves are killed and lying [lifeless] in battle with others on that very same earth. They had thought they owned this earth, and

had created relationships of enmity for possessing it.

41. Grabbing the creepers of karma, if one is somehow freed from hell after this calamity, one once again joins the caravan of men in

the world and nds oneself on this path of saṁsāra all over again.

The same also goes for one who has gone to the celestial realm beyond.

42. They sing thus, about Bharata: 'No one is able to follow the path

of the great-souled sage-king, son of Ṛṣabha, not even in one's mind,

O king, any more than a y can imitate Garuḍa (the eagle carrier of

Lord Viṣṇu).

43. Even though he was in the prime of life, in his total devotion to

Lord Viṣṇu, whose glories are supreme, Bharata renounced the

things dear to his heart—kingdom, friends, sons, and wife, which are so di cult to give up—as if they were excreta.

44. He did not desire the things that are normally so di cult to renounce—earth, sons, kinsmen, possessions, wife, and even the

Goddess of Fortune, who is sought by the best of the celestials, even

though Her glance was merciful [upon him], O king. This is

be tting those whose minds are absorbed in devotion to Lord Viṣṇu,

the enemy of Madhu; 74 for them even liberation is a tri e.

45. Even at the moment that he was giving up his birth as a deer, he

uttered, smiling: "Reverence to Nārāyaṇa, Hari, the enjoyer of

sacri ce, the Lord of dharma, the authority on codes of conduct, the

[goal of] yoga, the conclusion of Sāṅkhya, and the Lord (Īśvara) of prakṛti. "'

46. The sage-king Bharata's deeds and pure qualities are honored by

the Bhāgavata devotees. Whoever hears, recites, and glori es this story attains all blessings for himself: he does not need to seek anything from anywhere else. This story brings good fortune, long

life, wealth, fame, the celestial realms, and liberation."

Book VI

The Tale of Ajāmila: The Power of Mantra

Yoga Blueprint

The primary teaching imparted in this narrative pertains to the inherent power of mantra , Īśvara's names. Chanting mantra is the principal form of meditation not only in bhakti , but also in generic Patañjali-type meditational yoga . 1 It is the primary, simplest, and most immediate method of directly contacting Īśvara as manifest in sonic presence. That Ajāmila attained liberation merely by inadvertently calling out the name of Nārāyaṇa transmits a powerful message about the superexcellency of reciting such names. The passage informs the reader that there is no other yogic method that puri es the mind in a comparable way: whereas other processes and acts of atonement may cancel the negative e ects of karma— the negative e ects accrued from adharma— they do not remove the underlying desires that cause the mind to engage in compromised karma in

the rst place. Īśvara in the form of sound does, however (see " Kīrtana [Chanting]" for further discussion on mantra).

This section also contains an excellent analysis of the general process of karma and reincarnation. A further noteworthy element in this tale is the clear distinction that Yama , the god of death, makes between gods such as himself—namely, powerful celestial beings—and God as Īśvara, the ultimate Supreme Being. Yama is the Indic equivalent of Pluto.

Unlike the Greco-Roman and other Indo-European gods that were swept

aside by the spread of monotheistic Christianity, the monotheistic traditions of India retained the gods but relegated them to temporal spheres that, while supernormal, were nonetheless clearly inferior and subservient to Viṣṇu and the realm of Vaikuṇṭha. Of interest, too, in this passage, is that Ajāmila attained a form (svarūpa) as an associate of Bhagavān . As discussed in "The Divine Brahman Realms of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka," the liberated state in Bhāgavata theology involves receiving a Brahman form such that the relationship with Bhagavān can continue for eternity in Vaikuṇṭha.

Book VI, Chapter 1

6. Śrī Parīkṣit said:

"Now, O blessed one, please kindly explain how a person here in this world might avoid going to the hellish realms, where there are

intense and varied forms of punishments." [2]

7. Śrī Śuka said:

"If someone who has committed sin in thought, word, or deed does

not perform an act of atonement while still here in this world that is

appropriate to the sin, then that person will undoubtedly go to the

hellish regions, where there are severe punishments, as described to

you previously.3

8. Therefore, before the body succumbs to the ravishment of death,

one must ascertain the severity or lightness of one's errors and quickly endeavor to atone for one's sins in this world appropriately

—just as a doctor who knows the cause of sickness should prescribe

appropriate medicine for a disease."

9. The king said:

“Yet a person keeps committing sin again and again, as if powerless,

even though knowing from direct experience or from hearing from

others4 that this is detrimental to him or herself. So what, ultimately, is the use of atonement?

10. At times one ceases from inauspicious activities, but then at other times one engages in them again. Therefore it seems to me that atonement is useless, just like an elephant taking a bath is

useless.”5

11. Śrī Śuka, son of Bādarāyaṇa (Vyāsa), replied:

“It has never been stated that [sinful] action can be completely annulled by [other] action. In fact, this [type of process] is appropriate only for those who lack knowledge of the self. [Real]

atonement is in fact knowledge of the self. 6

12. Just as diseases do not overcome a person who is eating healthy

foods, so one who follows the sacred prescriptions, O king, slowly

becomes eligible for liberation.

13.–14. By means of austerity (tapas), celibacy (brahmacarya), meditation, sense control, renunciation, truthfulness (satya), cleanliness (śauca), the moral and ethical restraints (yamas and niyamas), the wise, who are knowers of dharma and endowed with faith, eliminate sin caused by body, word, or thought—even great sin—just like re destroys a cluster of bamboos.

15. Some people—those dedicated to Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] with

unswerving devotion—dispel sin completely, just as the sun dispels

fog.

16. Actually, a sinful person does not purify himself as much

through such things as austerity, O king, as does one whose life is

devoted to Kṛṣṇa by service to Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

17. This is certainly the best path in this world: it is safe and free of fear. Benevolent saints who are devoted to Nārāyaṇa are found on

this path.

18. O Lord of kings, the performance of acts of atonement does not

purify one who is averse to Nārāyaṇa, any more than river water puri es a vessel that has contained liquor.7

19. Those who have even once devoted their minds to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, attracted to His qualities, have performed [complete]

atonement. Not even in dreams do they see Yama, the Lord of death,

and his minions, who carry nooses.

20. [The sages] give as an example in this regard, this ancient legend (itīhāsa); it is an exchange between the messengers of Viṣṇu and those of Yama. Listen as I recount it.

21. In the town of Kāṇyakubja lived a twice-born brāhmaṇa by name of Ajāmila. He became the husband of a prostitute servant girl, and

so his high character became destroyed, polluted by that

relationship.

22. Adopting a despicable livelihood, the corrupt fellow maintained

his family by kidnapping, fraud, theft, and causing distress to other beings.

23. A long period of eighty-eight years passed by as Ajāmila was maintaining himself in this manner and indulging his sons from that woman, O king.

24. That old man had ten sons. From these, the youngest, a lad whose name happened to be Nārāyaṇa, was the great favorite of his parents.

25. The old man's heart was attached to that toddler, with his broken sentences, and he took great pleasure in gazing on his childish play.

26. Whenever he was eating and drinking, he used to feed the boy by o ering him food and drink, his heart bound by a ection. The foolish man did not see death was approaching.

27. Passing his life in this way, when the time of death presented itself, the ignorant man xed his mind on his son—the boy whose name was Nārāyaṇa.

28. At that time, he saw three very dreadful beings [the servants of Yama, Lord of death] bearing nooses in their hands. They had twisted snouts, erect hair, and had come to take him away.

29. With his senses thrown into confusion, Ajāmila called out loudly in a labored voice to his son, who was absorbed in play some distance away—

the one called Nārāyaṇa.

30. Upon hearing the repetition of Hari kīrtana— the name of their Lord— from the mouth of the dying man, O great king, the servants

of Viṣṇu immediately appeared there.

31. The messengers of Viṣṇu forcefully obstructed those who had been dispatched by Yama as they were dragging Ajāmila, husband

of a prostitute, from the interior of the heart region. 8

32. Thwarted in their task, the attendants of Yama said to them:

'Who are you to be obstructing the order of Yama, Lord of dharma?

33. Whose men are you? From where have you come? Are you

celestial gods, demigods, or are you perfected beings (siddhas)? Why are you preventing us from taking this man?

34. You both have eyes like lotus petals, and are dressed in

yellowsilken garments. You wear helmets, earrings, and bright lotus

garlands.9

35. You are both youthful, and you have four beautiful arms. You

bear bow, quiver, sword, club, conch, and lotus. Your appearance is

majestic.

36. You are illuminating the darkness in all directions with your personal e ulgence. For what reason do you impede us, the servants

of Yama? Yama is the guardian of dharma.'"

37. Śrī Śuka said:

“Upon being addressed in this way by the messengers of Yama, those attendants of Vāsudeva smiled. Then they replied as follows, in voices that resounded like thundering clouds.

38. The messengers of Viṣṇu said:

‘If you are indeed the order carriers of Yama, king of dharma, then explain to us the facts about dharma, righteousness, and also the characteristics of adharma, unrighteousness.

39. How do you think punishment should be enforced? And what is the appropriate circumstance for it? Moreover, among those who

perform deeds, who is subject to punishment: only certain men or

everyone?’

40. The messengers of Yama replied:

‘ Dharma is that which is enjoined in the Vedas, and adharma is its opposite. The Vedas are self-manifest, and are Nārāyaṇa Himself.

This is what we have heard.

41. It is by Him in His supreme abode that all these entities made of

rajas, sattva, and tamas are manifest in their various forms, activities, names, and qualities in the ways that they are.

42. The gods of the sun, re, sky, wind, moon, twilight, day, and night, cardinal directions, water, and earth, as well as Yama, god of

dharma himself, all of these are the witnesses of embodied beings.

43. It is by them that whatever constitutes adharma is determined, and the basis established for whatever is appropriate for

punishment. And everyone who performs actions is eligible for

punishment in accordance with the nature of their actions.

44. Those who act perform both benevolent actions and

nonbenevolent sinful ones. No embodied being can refrain from

performing action: this is the consequence of the in uence of the guṇas.

45. Whatever be the nature and degree of dharma and adharma performed by a person in this life, that same person experiences the

fruit of the very same nature and degree in the next life. [10]

46. O best of celestial beings! Just as there are three types [sattva, rajas, and tamas] perceived among beings in this world on account of the di

erences in the guṇas, so it can be inferred is the case in other worlds.

47. Just as the present state of Time gives an indication of the nature of past Time [that preceded] and future Time [that will succeed it], so the present life [of a person] indicates the dharma and adharma of past and future births.11

48. Our Lord [Yama], abiding in his city, clearly discerns a person's

previous life through [the power of] his mind, and evaluates what

will be that person's next life through the power of his mind. He himself is supreme and not subject to rebirth.

49. Just as in a dream [a person identi es with the dream body and

loses awareness of the waking body], so, an ignorant person

immersed in tamas considers himself to be the physical body and is not aware of previous and future bodies, since the memory of past

lives is lost.

50. The jīva accomplishes its purposes with the ve [organs of actions], and knows the ve [sense objects] with the ve

[knowledge-acquiring organs].12 Accompanied by the sixteenth [the mind], the jīva alone is the seventeenth, and it is he who experiences these three—the ve instruments of action, ve

instruments of knowledge, and the ve sense objects. 13

51. This subtle body made of these sixteen parts,14 which are constituted by the three śaktis (sattva, rajas, and tamas), is insurmountable. It is the cause of saṁsāra for a person—in other words, of the experiences of joy, sorrow, fear, and a iction.

52. The embodied ātman, whose six instruments of mind and senses have not been controlled, ignorant of its true nature, engages in action even if

not wishing to do so. Like a silkworm in its cocoon, a

person is covered by his or her activities, and is bewildered.15

53. Not a single being can ever exist for even one moment without performing action. One performs action even against one's will, due to the impulses of one's nature and the force of the guṇas. 16

54. As a result of these impulses of one's nature, and with unseen karma as the underlying cause, 17 a gross and subtle body is attained in conformity with the [mother's] womb and [father's] seed.

55. This compromised state of the puruṣa comes about from association with prakṛti. But it is dissolved very quickly from association with the Lord.

56. This Ajāmila was once endowed with Vedic learning, and was a repository of good character, conduct, and qualities. He honored his vows, was gentle and self-controlled, clean, truthful in speech, and well versed in the sacred utterances of the Vedas.

57. He was humble and diligent in serving the elderly, guests, sacred re, and teachers. He was a friend to all beings, saintly, of measured speech, and free of envy.

58. One day, this twice-born brāhmaṇa, obeying his father's request, went to the forest and returned carrying fruit, owers, kindling sticks, and kuśa grass [for the performance of Vedic ritual].

59. He saw some shameless śūdra with a servant girl, whose eyes were uttering about in intoxication, due to having drunk maireya

liquor.

60. Fallen [from civilized behavior] and shameless, he was irting,

singing, and laughing in the company of that woman. Her cloth had

become loosened.

61. After seeing that woman embraced by the arm of the śūdra, which was smeared with erotic [turmeric powder], Ajāmila

immediately fell under the control of [dormant desires] lying in his

heart, and became infatuated.

62. Struggling to the best of his abilities to restrain his mind with

his mind in accordance with the instructions of the sacred texts, he

was yet not able to bring it under control. His mind had become agitated by Cupid.

63. Possessed as if by a malevolent spell in the form of infatuation

provoked by that woman, Ajāmila lost control of his senses. Fixated

only on her in his mind, he abandoned the performance of his

prescribed dharma.

64. With the entirety of the wealth inherited from his family, Ajāmila indulged her with vulgar sensual pleasures stimulating to her fancy, in whatever way might be pleasing to her.

65. His rightful wife was a young brāhmaṇa lady from an excellent family. But this sinful fellow soon abandoned her, his better

judgment shattered by the coquettish glances of that wanton

woman.

66. In whatever way he could, [after squandering his inheritance,]

this foolish man obtained money through fair or foul means, and supported the family of that woman, as she had other children

[from di erent men].

67. This person became corrupt because of impure association. He

has led a sinful life and has transgressed the rules of the sacred texts. He has kept going on like this for a long time with

unrestrained and utterly vile behavior.

68. This person has committed many sins and has not performed

atonement, therefore, we are bringing him before Yama, the bearer

of the rod, where he will be puri ed by punishment.’”

Book VI, Chapter 2

1. Śrī Śuka, son of Vyāsa, said:

“Those messengers of Bhagavān Viṣṇu were skilled in the codes of human a airs. After considering everything that had been spoken by

the messengers of Yama, they responded as follows:

2. The messengers of Viṣṇu said:

‘ Aho! What a shame it is that unrighteousness, adharma, taints the assembly of those who are knowers of dharma, for punishment is being wantonly in icted by them upon a sinless person who does not merit punishment.

3. Those who are authorities are the guardians of living beings, and

[are supposed to be] saintly and impartial. If injustice exists among

them, to whom will the citizens go for protection?

4. However a superior person behaves, others will strive to emulate.

Whatever he or she establishes as standard, common people will

follow. 18

5. A common person places his head on the lap [of his protector]

and so sleeps securely, like an animal does. He himself does not know what is dharma and what is adharma.

6. How can such a superior person, if he or she is worthy of being

trusted by all beings, act contemptuously and in ict su ering on a

simple-natured person who has formed friendship with and placed

trust in him or her?

7. This person Ajāmila has performed atonement for sins performed

even in countless past lives because, in a helpless condition, he uttered the name of Hari, which bestows liberation.

8. When he chanted the four syllables "Nā-rā-ya-ṇa," the annulment

of sins was accomplished by this act—even for this sinful man.

9.–10. A thief; a drunkard; a murderer of friends; a killer of brāhmaṇas; one who de les his guru's bed; a murderer of a woman, king, parent, or cow; all these and other types of sinners—indeed for

every kind of evil person—the chanting of the name is the best atonement; the mind of Viṣṇu [is attracted] by that sound.

11. A sinful person is not puri ed by the acts of atonement and vows prescribed by the experts in Vedic knowledge, as much as by

the reciting of the syllables of the name of Hari. The name reminds

one of the qualities of Viṣṇu, whose glories are supreme.

12. Under normal circumstances, even when atonement is

performed, it is not fully e ective if the mind again runs along the

path of unrighteousness. For one who desires to eliminate all karma, it is in fact the repetition of the names and qualities of Hari that makes the mind pure (sāttvika) [and hence one loses the desire to perform unrighteous acts in the rst place].

13. Therefore, do not take him away. Because this man mentioned

the name of Bhagavān as he was dying, he has accomplished

atonement for all of his sins.

14. The sages know that reciting the name of Viṣṇu, the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, removes all sin, even if uttered as a designation for someone else, jokingly, inserted in a song, or disrespectfully.

15. If a person utters "Hari," even unconsciously, when falling, tripping, injured, bitten, burned, or struck, that person is not eligible for su ering in

hell.

16. Atonements for sins have been prescribed by the sages: severe atonements for severe sins, and minor atonements for minor sins.

17. However, although such sins are puri ed by acts such as austerity (tapas), charity, and the performance of vows, their causes [desires], born of unrighteousness, are not cleansed from the heart. But they are cleansed by service to the lotus feet of Īśvara.

18. Viṣṇu's glories are supreme. Chanting His name, whether knowingly or unknowingly, burns the sins of a person, just like re burns kindling wood.

19. Just as the most potent medicine manifests its inherent e ects, even if consumed by an ignorant person, so is the case with mantra when uttered.'"

20. Śrī Śuka said:

"After establishing very clearly the nature of Bhāgavata dharma in this way, O king, the servants of Viṣṇu freed that brāhmaṇa from Yama's bonds, and released him from death.

21. After receiving this response, the servants of Yama went back for an audience with Yama. They informed King Yama about everything that had happened, O subduer of enemies.

22. The brāhmaṇa, freed from the bonds, regained his senses and his fear was dispelled. He bowed his head to the servants of Viṣṇu, overwhelmed in

ecstasy by the vision of them.

23. The servants of the great Lord Viṣṇu, perceiving that Ajāmila was desiring to speak, suddenly disappeared from there right in front of his eyes, O sinless Parīkṣit!

24. In this way, from the conversation between the messengers of Viṣṇu and those of Yama, Ajāmila heard both about the pure dharma

associated with Bhagavān free from all self-interest, and also at the same time about the dharma associated with the three Vedas, which is based on the guṇas. 19

25. Since he had heard about the wonderful greatness of Bhagavān, Ajāmila immediately became infused with bhakti, devotion, and became greatly repentant about his sinful self:

26. ‘ Aho! After losing control of my senses what great wrong I did!

As a result, I ruined my brāhmaṇa status and begot sons in a woman of low morals.

27. Curses upon me! I am a stain on the reputation of my lineage

and condemned as a scoundrel by the righteous. I abandoned my

son and chaste wife, and went with an unchaste woman given to drinking.

28. Aho! I have also deserted my old parents by neglecting their order. They are without protectors or other relatives and have

su ered great hardship. I am a worthless rascal.

29. It is clear that a person such as I will fall into the hell called Aruṇa, where lusty people who break the codes of dharma undergo the punishments of Yama. 20

30. Aho! Was this a dream, or did I actually perceive this wonderful occurrence here? Where have they now gone, those who were

dragging me away holding bonds?

31. And where have those four beautiful perfected beings (siddhas) gone, who freed me as I was being led away to the lower regions,

bound by fetters?

32. Although I am a wretched fellow, I must have performed some

auspicious deed causing me to have that vision of those most

learned beings. My mind has become lled with joy because of

them.

33. Otherwise, it would not be possible for the tongue of someone like me to utter the name of Viṣṇu, Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, as I was dying. I am a degraded keeper of a harlot.

34. I am a shameless sinful rascal who has destroyed his brāhmaṇa

heritage. What am I in comparison to that name of Bhagavān,

“Nārāyaṇa,” which is auspicious?

35. Such is the person that I am. Therefore, keeping my breath, senses, and mind controlled, I will conduct myself in such a way that my life will never again sink into deep tamas.

36. Having freed myself from this bondage born of karma, lust, and ignorance, I shall regain control of myself and become peaceful, a

true friend to all beings, amiable, and compassionate.

37. I am a wretch. My soul has been seized by māyā in the form of a woman, by whom I have been made into a plaything, like a pet deer. I am going to commit to freeing myself.

38. I will give up the illusion of “I” and “mine” in the form of the

body and its possessions, and dedicate my mind to Bhagavān, puri ed by chanting his glories (kīrtana). I will become determined to keep my intelligence xed only on things that are not false.'

39. From just a moment's association with saintly beings (sādhus), complete detachment arose in Ajāmila in this way. Freed from all bondage, he set out for Hardvāra, the door of the Gaṅgā river [in the Himālayas].

40. In that divine abode, Ajāmila took his seat and situated himself

in yoga. He withdrew the ve senses [from their objects], and xed his mind on the ātman.

41. Then he detached his mind from the guṇas through complete absorption on the self (samādhi), and attached it to the form of Bhagavān, who is Brahman, the Soul of experience.

42. When his mind was fully xed, he then again saw those beings

from before. Realizing that he had seen them previously, the

brāhmaṇa o ered them homage by bowing his head.

43. After that vision, Ajāmila gave up his body at a sacred place on the banks of the Gaṅgā. Immediately he received a spiritual body of the type attained by the associates of Bhagavān [in Vaikuṇṭha].21

44. The brāhmaṇa climbed onto a golden vehicle, and departed through the celestial realms along with those servants of Viṣṇu, the

Great Being. He went to where Viṣṇu, the Lord of Śrī, the Goddess

of Fortune (Lakṣmī) resides [Vaikuṇṭha].

45. Ajāmila had abandoned his vows and strayed away from all

dharma. As the fallen husband of a harlot engaging in forbidden activities, he was falling into hell. But he was immediately liberated

by uttering the name of Bhagavān.

46. For those desiring liberation, there is nothing superior for severing the bonds of karma than this reciting (anukīrtana) of [the names] of Viṣṇu, the Lord of all holy places.

47.–48. This supremely intimate narrative destroys all sins. Any yogī

who hears and recites it with faith will not go to hell or see the servants of Yama. Howsoever an illfated human one might have

been, he or she will be considered great in Vaikuṇṭha, the abode of

Viṣṇu.

49. Ajāmila, even though referring to his son, uttered the name of

Hari while dying. What, then, to speak of uttering it with faith?!"

Book VI, Chapter 3

1. The king said:

“When Lord Yama, king of dharma, heard this account from his servants, how did he respond to them? Everyone in this world is under his control, yet his servants were obstructed and his order disobeyed by the order carriers of Viṣṇu.

2. Such outing of the order of Lord Yama has never been heard of

ever before by anyone, O sage! I am certain that other than you,

noble sir, no one can resolve this anomaly in the minds of common people.”

3. Śrī Śuka replied:

“The servants of Yama, O king, whose mission had been thwarted,

related everything to their master Yama, the Lord of the city of Saṁyamanī.

4. The messengers of Yama said:

‘O master: how many rulers in this world actually are there

responsible for awarding the fruits of action for living beings

engaged in the three kinds of activities?22

5. If there are many rulers who uphold justice in the world, who would get to bestow death [hell] and who the celestial realm [in the

event there were a disagreement among them]?

6. And if there be a plurality of rulers for the multitude of beings

who act, then rulership would become a minor position in name

only, like that of the governor of a province.

7. Therefore [as far as we are concerned] you are the one supreme

Lord among all beings, including the celestial demigods. You are the

ruler, awarder of justice, and arbitrator of what is auspicious and inauspicious for humankind.

8. The authority of that ruler—that is, of you—has been

transgressed and as of today is no longer upheld in the world: your

order has been transgressed by those four messengers—those

perfected beings.

9. They forcefully cut the bonds from that sinful wretch as he was

being taken by us to the torture chambers under your order, and then they freed him.

10. Upon him calling the name “Nārāyaṇa,” they swiftly arrived, telling him: “Do not fear.” We wish to know who they are, if you

feel we are competent to know.’”

11. Śrī Śuka, son of Bādarāyaṇa, said:

“Questioned in this way, Lord Yama, who is the judicator of created

beings, became pleased with his messengers. He replied smilingly, remembering the lotus feet of Hari.

12. Yama said:

‘Higher than I is the Supreme Being of all moving and non-moving

things. In Him the universe is sewn, lengthwise and crosswise like a

cloth. 23 Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva, the Maintainer, Creator, and Destroyer of this world, are His partial expansions. 24 This world is under His control, like a bull with a rope through its nose.

13. By means of the respective caste designations which are found

in His words [the Vedic injunctions] consisting of regulations, 25 He binds people just like cows are bound by means of ropes. Bound by

the restraints of their duties and actions, people bear o erings to Him fearfully.

14.–15. I, the great Indra, Nirṛti, the Pracetas, Soma, Agni, Śiva, Pavana, Viriñci [Brahmā], the [twelve] Ādityas, the Viśvas, the

[eight] Vasus, the Sādhyas, the host of Maruts, the host of Rudras,

the siddhas, perfected beings, along with others such as the creators of the universe [like Marīci], and the lords of the celestials, as well

as Bhṛgu and others, 26 none of us understand His intention, since we are a ected by māyā, even though we are predominantly in sattva and untouched by rajas and tamas. What then to speak of others?

16. He is transcendent. Even though He exists in the heart within

the self of all beings, a living being cannot perceive Him through the

senses, mind, life airs, intellect, or [Vedic] words—just as physical

forms cannot perceive the eyes.

17. Hari is self-dependent, the Supreme Lord, transcendent, the ultimate controller of māyā, the Supreme Soul. His messengers often wander about here in this world. They have the same nature,

qualities, and form as He,27 and so are very attractive to the mind.

18. Viṣṇu's associates are worshipped by the celestials. Their forms

are wondrous, and it is very hard to attain a vision of them. They

protect the mortal devotees of Viṣṇu from enemies and from

everything—including even from I myself.

19. The codes of dharma are decreed by Bhagavān Himself. Neither the ṛṣi sages, nor the celestial demigods, nor the best of the perfected siddhas, nor the demons or humans understand them, what then to speak of the angelic vidhyādharas, cāraṇas, and other celestials?

20.–21. The self-manifest Brahmā, Nārada, Śiva, Sanat-Kumāra,

Kapila, Manu, Prahlāda, King Janaka, Bhīṣma, Bali, Śuka, and I

myself, only we twelve know the Bhāgavata dharma,28 my men. It is intimate, completely pure, and di cult to understand; but, having

known it, one achieves the nectar of immortality.

22. It is this alone that has been handed down as the ultimate dharma for humankind in this world: bhakti yoga for Bhagavān by reciting His name and other such devotional activities.

23. Just see the greatness of chanting the name of Hari, my sons! By

this, even Ajāmila was freed from the bonds of death!

24. Just this much alone is su cient to remove the sins of human

beings—the reciting of the names, deeds, and qualities of Bhagavān.

Even though he was actually calling out to his son, the sinful Ajāmila said "Nārāyaṇa" and so attained liberation.

25. That other great being [Manu, the compiler of the conventional

dharma texts] often did not know this truth. Alas, his intelligence was bewildered by the divine māyā! Performing rituals in the form of great sacri ces involving the three sacred res[29] in accordance

with the sweet owery words of the three Vedas, his mind became dull. [30]

26. After considering all this, those who are intelligent engage in loving devotion to the unlimited Bhagavān (bhāva-yoga) with all their heart. Even if there is some sin among them, nevertheless, such

people do not deserve any punishment from me: the chanting of the

name of Viṣṇu will destroy it.

27. Those saintly devotees of Bhagavān see all beings equally.

Praises of their purity are sung by the siddhas, perfected beings, as well as by the celestials. You should never approach them—they are

protected by the club of Hari: neither we nor Time have jurisdiction

over them.

28. The nectar of the lotus feet of Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa] is forever pleasing to the community of the highest renunciants, who are

devoid of all material possessions. Bring to me the unrighteous who

are averse to relishing these stories, but who instead relish the bonds of the household, which is the pathway to hell.

29. Bring to me those unrighteous souls whose tongues have never

spoken of the name and qualities of Bhagavān, whose minds have never remembered His lotus feet, whose heads have never bowed

down to Kṛṣṇa even once, and who have never done any service for

Viṣṇu.

30. May that Bhagavān, Nārāyaṇa, the primeval Person, forgive the o enses performed by us through our servants. Forgiveness is tting

for Him. He is magnanimous on His foolish servants, and we hold

out our hands in supplication. Reverence to the Supreme Person.’”

31. [Śrī Śuka said:]

“Therefore, O descendant of the Kuru dynasty, you should know

that the only atonement for all sins, even great ones, is the reciting

of the names of Viṣṇu (saṅkīrtana). This brings auspiciousness to the world.

32. The mind is not puri ed as much by vows and other such things as it is by the exemplary devotion of those who always hear and chant about the great deeds of Hari.

33. One who has tasted the nectar of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa never

again enjoys the guṇas of māyā. These lead to vice and have been renounced by them. Others, on the other hand, a icted by lust, strive to clean the rajas from the mind by [material] action. But from doing this, only more rajas is produced anew.

34. The servants of Yama, their minds struck with awe, from then

on remembered the glories of Bhagavān as described by their master.

Being afraid of those who have devoted themselves to Acyuta

[Kṛṣṇa], they do not dare to look at them from that time henceforth,

O king.

35. The great sage Agastya recited this intimate story when seated

in the Malaya hills worshipping Hari."

The Tale of King Citraketu: The Dead Son Returns

Yoga Blueprint

This passages continues in the vein of a number of the previous teachings in terms of illustrating the illusory and ephemeral nature of family relationships and attachments. The stark and blunt message it adds to this is that once even the most intimate relationships are severed by death, the departed ātman pursues its trajectory into the next life and does not even remember its previous relationships, even if reencountering those same people.

The opening verses below point to the rarity of those who seriously commit their lives to seeking truth.

Book VI, Chapter 14

1. Śrī Parīkṣit said:

"Vṛtra was sinful and his nature was rājasic and tāmasic. How did unwavering devotion to Nārāyaṇa, Bhagavān, arise in him, O

brāhmaṇa?

2. Devotion to the lotus feet of Mukunda rarely manifests even among the celestials who are in pure sattva, or among the sages whose hearts are untainted.

3. Living entities are as innumerable as the particles of dust on the

earth. From those among them who are human, only a few strive for

higher goals.

4. From these, for the most part, there are only a few who seek liberation, O best of the brāhmaṇas. And from thousands who seek liberation, only one becomes perfected and attains liberation. 31

5. And even among thousands who are liberated and perfected, a peaceful soul who is devoted to Nārāyaṇa is very rare, O best of the

sages.

6. So, given all this, how did the sinful Vṛtra, the tormentor of all

the worlds, become someone with such unwavering devotion to

Kṛṣṇa in that terrible con ict [with Indra]? 32

7. I am greatly puzzled by this, O master, and eager to hear. Vṛtra

impressed Indra of the thousand eyes, 33 by his valor in the battle."

8. Śrī Sūta replied:

"The great Śuka, son of Vyāsa, was pleased by the question of the

faithful Parīkṣit. He honored him and spoke these words.

9. Śrī Śuka said:

'Listen attentively to this narrative, O king, which I heard from the

mouths of Vyāsa, Nārada, and also of sage Devala.

10. There once was an emperor among the Śūrasena people known

as Citraketu who ruled over the earth, O king. During his reign, the

earth provided all needs.

11. He had many wives.34 However, although he wanted progeny, he could not obtain any o spring from them.

12. Consequently anxiety a icted this king, even though he was

endowed with all desirable qualities such as good looks,

youthfulness, generosity, nobility, learning, opulence, and wealth.

13. Neither his opulence, nor all his queens with their lovely eyes, nor this earth of which he was sovereign could give the emperor any

satisfaction.

14. Once, the great sage Aṅgirā, who happened to be wandering

around those realms, arrived unexpectedly at his palace.

15. The king honored Aṅgirā according to custom by rising to greet

him and making o erings and other such things. Then, after the sage had received hospitality and was comfortably seated, the king

sat nearby with attentive mind.

16. When the king had respectfully bowed down on the ground and

had taken his seat, Aṅgirā returned respect to the king. He then addressed the king by speaking as follows, O king.

17. Śrī Aṅgirā said:

“Are you and your citizens well and in good spirits? Just as a person

is protected by the seven evolutes of prakṛti (buddhi, ahaṅkāra, and the ve tanmātras), 35 so is the king protected by seven prakṛtis (constituents of statehood: kingship, ministers, allies, treasury, fortress, army, territory). 36

18. Truly, when a king entrusts himself to these prakṛtis, he secures the highest well-being. Reciprocally, the prakṛtis—ministers, etc.—

are delivered of their cares by the king, O Lord of men.

19. Are your wives, ministers of state, servants, merchant guilds, counselors, citizens, communities, regional kings, and sons under your control?

20. If one is in control of oneself, then all these other things come

under one's control; the worlds, along with their rulers, all

enthusiastically o er such a person tribute.

21. But I can see that your mind is not at peace. Whether on account

of yourself or of others, your face is disturbed by worry. You have

some desire that has not been ful lled."

22. Upon being confronted in this way by the sage, who actually already knew the cause, O king, Citraketu, desiring o spring,

responded to him bowed down in humility.

23. Citraketu said:

“Your holiness! The sins of yogīs have been destroyed by dint of their austerities, knowledge, and samādhi insight. What is there that is not known by them about embodied beings, whether internal or

external?

24. Nevertheless, since you have requested, O brāhmaṇa, I will disclose what is disturbing my mind, obliged by the order of your

holiness, even though you already know.

25. Because I am without progeny, my possessions, majesty, and

kingdom, which are so sought after by rulers of the world, do not

bring any solace to me, just as things unrelated to nourishment do

not bring solace to those who are hungry and thirsty.

26. Therefore please protect me, O blessed one, as I am falling into a

dark [hell] along with my ancestors.37 Instruct me as to how to overcome such a destiny by means of progeny, as otherwise such a

fate is very di cult to avoid.”’

27. Śrī Śuka said:

‘Beseeched in this manner, Aṅgirā, the saintly and venerable son of

Brahmā, being compassionate, o ered rituals to Tvaṣṭā,38 including a sweet dish he had cooked for him.

28. The principal and eldest of the king’s queens was called

Kṛtaduti, O descendant of Bharata. The twice-born sage gave the remnants of the sacri ce to her.

29. Then he said to the monarch: “A son will be born to you, O king.

He will be a source of joy and also of sorrow to you.” At that, Angirā, the son of Brahmā, departed.

30. And so it came to be: just from eating that sweet dish, Queen

Kṛtadyuti became pregnant from Citraketu, just as Kṛttikā did for

Agni. 39

31. Because of the potency of the king of the Śūrasenas, her pregnancy grew gradually every day just like the waxing moon, O

king.

32. In due course, the time arrived, and a son was born, causing great joy among the Śūrasena citizens who heard the news.

33. The king was overjoyed. When his son had been bathed,

cleansed, and decorated, the king had benedictions chanted by the

brāhmaṇas, and then arranged for the birth ceremony to be performed.

34. He bestowed upon the brāhmaṇas gold, silver, garments, ornaments, villages, horses, elephants, and six crores of cows.

35. The magnanimous regent also showered desirable things on the

other citizens for the prosperity, fame, and longevity of his son, just

like rain clouds shower on living beings.

36. Since the son had been obtained with di culty, the a ection of

the saintly king for him grew every day, just as does the a ection of

a poor man for wealth when it is attained with di culty.

37. And excessive a ection born out of ignorance also grew in the

mother, Kṛtadyuti, for her son. Meanwhile, a fever of desire for bearing children burned in her co-wives.

38. As he fondled his son every day, special a ection for the wife

who had given him birth grew in the king. This was not matched

toward the other wives.

39. Overwhelmed by envy, by the distress of being childless, and by

the indi erence of the king, the other wives lamented their

situation:

40. “Woe betide an unfortunate woman who is childless and not

respected in her home. She is neglected as if she were a servant by

the co-wives who have beautiful sons.

41. In fact, what distress is there for servant girls who are respected

for their steady service of the master? But an unfortunate woman is

like a maidservant of a maidservant.”

42. In this way, intense hatred arose in the queens. They were tormented both by their co-wife’s blessing of a son and by being neglected by the king.

43. Being unable to tolerate the king anymore, the cruel-hearted women administered poison to the infant. Their good sense had

become destroyed by hatred.

44. Unaware of the great sin performed by her co-wives, Kṛtadyuti

looked at her son and, thinking he was just sleeping, wandered about the house.

45. Eventually, thinking that the boy had been sleeping rather a long time, the intelligent woman requested the nurse: “My dear, please bring me my son!”

46. After approaching the supine child, the nurse saw that his eyes

were turned upward and that his life airs, powers of senses, and mind had passed away. “I am doomed,” she said, and fell on the ground.

47. Upon hearing the highly distressed cry of her maid, who was also wildly beating her breast with her two hands, the queen hastily

entered the room and approached her son. She saw that he had

suddenly died.

48. Overwhelmed by shock, she fell to the ground and lost

consciousness, her hair and clothes in disarray.

49. Thereupon, after hearing the commotion, all the people living in

the king’s palace, men as well as women, came to the scene. They

too became overwhelmed with grief, sharing in the calamity. Those

who had committed the evil deed also wailed falsely.

50. When he heard that his son had died of unknown causes, the king became blind with grief. He rushed there, stumbling on the way due to intense grief in amed by the bonds of a ection.

51. Surrounded by his ministers and brāhmaṇas, the king fell unconscious at the feet of his dead son. Taking long-drawn-out

breaths, he was not able to speak. His voice became choked up and mu ed with tears, and his clothes and hair were thrown into

disarray.

52. At this, when the pure-hearted queen saw her husband

overwhelmed with this great grief over the dead boy, his only son,

she lamented in various ways. This increased the heartfelt pain of

the ministers and citizens.

53. She bathed her two breasts, beauti ed with ointment and

kuṅkuma powder, with mascara-laden teardrops. Tearing at her hair, her garland in disarray, she lamented in various ways for her son in

her lovely voice, like a kurarī bird:

54. "Aho, O Creator! You must be really foolish: since this death comes to the subsequent [generation] while the previous one still lives, you are acting against [the rules] of your own creation! And if

this is not the case, then you must surely be an enemy!

55. Perhaps the fact is that there is no chronological order in this

world in the birth and death of embodied beings, and that things happen in accordance with personal karma. Even then, you have severed the bond of a ection for this child—and this bond was

made by you yourself for the growth of your creation [in which case

you must be really foolish!].

56. My darling son—after seeing your father overwhelmed with grief, you should not abandon me. I am inconsolable and helpless. Through you, we will easily cross over this darkness of [saṁsāra]—it is di cult to cross over without o spring. [40]

57. Get up, darling. These friends of yours of your age are calling you to play. You have surely slept for long enough and are ravished by hunger. Eat. Drink from my breast. Remove our sorrow, and that of our friends and family, O joy of your father.

58. My good fortune is gone, O son, for I cannot see your innocent smile, happy eyes, and lotus face. I do not hear your charming voice. Or have you been taken by that cruel one [Yama, Lord of death]? Have you gone to the next world, from where there is no return?”’

59. Śrī Śuka said:

‘As his wife was mourning the dead son with various laments of this sort, Citraketu, greatly aggrieved, wailed at the top of his voice along with her.

60. As that husband and wife were lamenting, all their attendants, men and women, wept. Everything became deprived of life.

61. The sage known as Aṅgirā knew that the king had fallen into this state of despair, that his peace of mind was destroyed, and that he was without a guide. So he arrived there with Nārada.’”

Book VI, Chapter 15

1. Śrī Śuka said:

“The king, overwhelmed with grief and lying next to the dead body,

seemed equally dead himself. The two sages spoke to him, and

enlightened him with words of wisdom:

2. ‘This person for whom you grieve, O king, whom do you suppose

he was to you in a previous life, or is at present, or will be in a future life? And who are you to him?

3. Just as grains of sand are brought together and then thrust apart

by the force of the current, so, in the same way, embodied beings

are joined and separated by Time.

4. Just as among seeds of grain, [some] seeds are productive and

[some] are not productive, similarly among living beings, impelled

by the māyā of the Lord, [some] living beings survive and [some] do not.

5. You, we, and all these moving and non-moving entities who

appear contemporaneous do not [factually] exist even in the

present, O king, just as we did not exist before our births and deaths, nor will we exist after them.

6. Although He is impartial like a boy [at play], the Lord of beings creates, preserves, and destroys beings by means of other beings.

These beings are not independent but created from Himself.

7. The body of the embodied one is born from a body [the mother] by means of another body [the father], just as a seed is generated from another seed. But the embodied one is eternal, just as objects [like the atoms of the earth] are eternal. 41

8. This distinction between the embodied one and the body is construed by lack of discrimination (viveka) and is primordial. It is imagined, just as is the distinction in an object between its universal and its individuator.’”42

9. Śrī Śuka said:

“Consoled in this way by these words spoken by the brāhmaṇa, King Citraketu wiped his distraught face with his hands and responded.

10. The king said:

‘Who are you two who have arrived disguised in the garb of ascetic

mendicants? Full of wisdom, you are the most distinguished of the

distinguished.

11. There are certainly brāhmaṇas who are dear to Bhagavān roaming the earth at will disguised as madmen, enlightening those

such as I who have dull understanding.

12.–15. [Such sages are] Kumāra, Nārada, Ṛbhu, Aṅgirā, Devala,

Asita, Apāntaratamā, Vyāsa, Mārkaṇḍeya, Gautama, Vasiṣṭha,

Bhagavān Rāma, 43 Kapila, Bādarāyaṇi [Śuka], Durvāsā, Yājñavalkya, Jātukarṇa, Āruṇi, Romaśa, Cyavana, Datta, Āsuri, Patañjali, sage

Vedaśirā, the sage Bodhya, along with Pañcaśirā, Hiraṇyanābha,

Kauśalya, Śrutadeva, and Ṛtadhvaja. These perfected masters

wander about for the sake of [imparting] knowledge.

16. Therefore, O masters, please bestow the light of knowledge upon me; I am a vulgar beast, my intelligence is dull, and I am immersed

in obscuring tamas.’

17. Śrī Aṅgirā said:

‘I am Aṅgirā, O king, the one who bestowed a son upon you in the

rst place, when you desired one! And this is his lordship sage Nārada himself, the son of Brahmā.

18.–19. You are now immersed in tamas because of grief over your son. It is di cult to overcome. But we did not forget you, and have

come here, O master, to show kindness to you. You are a servant of

the Supreme Being and do not deserve to be in this situation. Do not

lament: you are a bhakta of Bhagavān, devoted to the brāhmaṇas, O

master.

20. When I rst came to your house, I could have given you

supreme knowledge at that time. But when I understood that you were intent on something else, then I just gave you a son.

21.–22. So now you are experiencing the su ering of those who

have sons. The same holds true for those who have wives, homes,

riches, prosperity, and powers of various sorts, the temporary

objects of the senses such as sound—the opulences of kingship, a mighty kingdom, strength, treasury, servants, ministers, and friends.

23. These all bestow trouble, fear, illusion, and grief, O Lord of the

Śūrasenas; they are dreams, māyā, concoctions of the mind. Their appearance is like the city of the gandharvas [a castle in the sky].

24. They are creations of the mind. Although they are perceived, they are not real, since they are without enduring substance. A person contemplates them with the mind, due to the force of past

karma, and then produces further varieties of karma. 44

25. In fact, this body of the embodied one is made of the gross elements of matter, the knowledge-acquiring senses and action-performing senses. It is said that it brings su ering and various a ictions to the embodied one.

26. Therefore, re ect on the true situation of the ātman with a sound mind. Give up the conviction that objects in the world of duality are stable. Then you will attain a state of peacefulness.'

27. Śrī Nārada said:

'Please accept the teaching (upaniṣad) of this mantra that I bestow on you. Meditating upon it, you will have a vision of the Supreme

Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa [Viṣṇu]. 45

28. Draw near to the soles of His feet, O lord of men. In the past,

Lord Śiva and other gods, after freeing themselves from this illusory

world of duality, immediately attained to His glory, which is

incomparable and supreme. You too will also attain the Supreme

without delay.'"

Book VI, Chapter 16

1. Śrī Śuka, son of Badarāyaṇa said:

"O king, after this, the celestial sage granted a vision of the king's

dead son to all the grieving kinsmen. Then he spoke.

2. Śrī Nārada said:

'O jīvātman (embodied soul), 46 blessings upon you! Just look at your mother and father, and your friends and relatives burning with

intense grief because of what you have done.

3. Take back possession of your body for the remainder of your life.

Surrounded by your kinsmen, indulge in the enjoyments bestowed

by your father, and eventually ascend on to the throne of the king

yourself!'

4. The jīva (soul) said:

'In accordance with karma, I have been transmigrating through numerous births—as a celestial being, animal, and human. In which

birth were these two my father and mother?

5. Kinsmen, relatives, enemies, those who are neutral, friends, the

indi erent, and adversaries—everyone becomes each of these in

turn, in mutually reciprocating roles with everyone else.

6. Just like objects such as articles of trade or gold move about from here to there among people, so does the jīva move about in

[various] wombs and procreators.

7. The relationships with objects and living beings among people is

clearly seen to be impermanent. Yet for as long as there is a relationship with these things, there is a sense of "mine-ness" over

them (that is, ownership).

8. The jīva is eternal and without any sense of I-ness (ego), yet when it attains a particular birth, a sense of "this belongs to me" develops

in it for as long as it nds itself in that particular birth.

9. This soul is eternal, imperishable, subtle, the support of

everything, and self-aware. Being a master, it creates its own

universe for itself, through its own guṇas of māyā.

10. No one is dear to it, no one its enemy, no one its kin, no one

foreign to it; it is the one seer (draṣṭṛ) of all the minds of the performers of virtuous and faulty acts.

11. The soul does not in fact accept the fruits of activity, virtuous, or faulty. It is the lord who is seated neutrally as the witness of cause

and e ect.’”

12. Śuka, son of Badarāyaṇa, said:

“After uttering these words, the jīva then departed, and its relatives were struck with amazement. They severed the bonds of personal

a ection, and were freed from their sorrow.

13. After removing the dead body of their relative and performing

all the appropriate rites, the kinsmen gave up their a ection. It is

the giver of grief, illusion, fear, and distress, yet it is so di cult to give up.

14. Remembering the words of the sage, the killers of the child, who

had lost their luster because of the child’s murder, became ashamed.

Under the direction of brāhmaṇas they undertook the penance for infanticide there on the banks of the Yamunā river.

15. When Citraketu’s mind was enlightened in this way by the words of the brāhmaṇa, he stepped out from the dark well of household life, like an elephant from the mud of a lake.

16. After bathing in the Kālindī river in the prescribed manner and performing pious rites with water, Citraketu worshipped the two

sons of Brahmā silently with controlled breath (prāṇa).

17. The venerable Nārada, pleased that the bhakta king had controlled his mind and submitted to their instructions, gave him the following [prayer] to recite:

18. ‘Reverence to You, Bhagavān Vāsudeva; let me contemplate You.

Reverence to Pradyumna, Aniruddha, and Saṅkarṣaṇa.

19. Reverence to You who are absolute wisdom. You have a form of

supreme bliss, and You delight in your own nature. You are peaceful

and Your knowledge transcends duality.

20. Reverence to You who are situated beyond the waves of śakti (māyā) in the experience of Your own bliss. Reverence to You, Lord Hṛṣīkeśa, the Supreme. Your form is unlimited.

21. He is the One who is still not understood when words have exhausted themselves, along with the mind. [47] He has no material name and form (nāma-rūpa), is pure consciousness (cit), and transcends cause and e ect. May He be favorably disposed toward us.

22. From Him this world is born, and in Him it rests and is dissolved, just like the earth with regards to the things made of earth. Reverence to that Brahman which is You Yourself.

23. The life air, senses, intelligence, and mind cannot know Him or

touch Him. He pervades within and without, like the sky. I o er reverence to Him.

24. The body, senses, life airs, mind, and intellect, these perform activities when pervaded by His rays. Otherwise they cannot do so,

just like iron cannot perform functions when it is not heated. That

which is known as “the seer” (draṣṭṛ) in the states of consciousness

[waking, sleeping, deep sleep, pure consciousness] is Him.

25. Oṁ. Reverence to Bhagavān, the Supreme Person, the almighty and omnipotent Lord. Your two lotus feet are tenderly massaged by

the lotus budlike hands of the multitudes of devotees surrounding You. You are the Ultimate Supreme Being.’”

26. Śri Śuka said:

“After Nārada had taught this practice to the submissive bhakta king, he departed with Aṅgirāsa to the abode of the self-manifest Brahmā.

27. So for seven days, imbibing only water, Citraketu meditated with focused attention on that practice in the manner instructed and

imparted by Nārada.

28. Then, O king, at the end of seven days, by concentrating on that

practice without interruption, he attained the position of lordship over the celestial vidyādharas. 48

29. Thereafter, a few more days later still, the ow of his mind became enlightened, and he attained the presence of the feet of the

God of gods, Śeṣa. 49

30. He saw the Lord, who was as white as a lotus ber, wearing blue

garments, and adorned with a radiant headdress, armlets, belt, and

bracelets. He had a smiling face, and reddish eyes, and was

surrounded by an entourage of perfected yogī masters.

31. All the king’s sins were destroyed from seeing the Lord, and his

subtle body became pure and cleansed. His eyes lled with tears of

love from intensi ed devotion, and his hairs stood on end. He

approached silently, and o ered homage to that primordial Being.

32. With teardrops of love, he continually dampened the footstool of

the lotus feet of the most praiseworthy Lord Viṣṇu. He was so choked up with love, he was incapable of o ering homage for a long

time as no words issued forth.

33. Then, recovering his speech, the king controlled his mind with his higher reason, and restrained his senses from external

engagement. Then he spoke the following words to that personal

Being, the guru of the universe, who is described in the scriptures of the Vaiṣṇavas. [*50*]

34. Citraketu said:

‘O unconquerable One! Although You are unconquerable, Your

Lordship is conquered by the saints (sādhus) whose minds are controlled. Their hearts, in turn, have been conquered by You. You

are so merciful that You give Yourself to those who always engage

in Your bhakti without any personal desire.

35. O Bhagavān! The emergence, preservation, and dissolution of the universe is nothing other than an expression of Your power. The

[secondary] creators are partial manifestations of partial

manifestations of You. 51 Because of thinking themselves independent, they vie among each other in vain.

36. It is You who exist at the beginning, middle, and end of

[everything from] the smallest atom to the entire cosmic

manifestation, even though You are immune from these three [states

of change]. That which remains permanent throughout the

beginning, termination as well as intervening period of all beings, is

none other than You alone.

37. This egglike universe is covered by seven layers of earth atoms,

etc., each one ten times thicker than the previous one.52 That place where it, along with billions and billions of other universes exist like miniscule atoms, is Ananta, the unlimited One [You].

38. There are those, thirsty for sense grati cation, who [have the appetites] of animals even though they are in human forms. They

worship the lower celestial beings, rather than You, the Supreme.

But those blessings received from the celestials, O Lord, come to an end when the celestials themselves come to an end—just like the boons received from a royal family [when the dynasty is destroyed].

39. [Even if] desires for sensual pleasure are o ered to You, O

Supreme Being, they do not generate karma, just as cooked grains do not germinate. [This is because] You are not made of the guṇas

but are pure awareness, while the snares [of karma] of the world of duality (saṁsāra) are attributes of the guṇas. 53

40. O unconquerable One! [Saṁsāra] was conquered by You when

You delivered the awless teachings of Bhāgavata- dharma. Those sages who are free of all desires and delight in their own ātman, worship You for liberation.

41. The attitude of discrimination—making distinctions of I, you, mine, yours—which is found elsewhere, does not exist here among

the people [following the Bhāgavata- dharma]. Actions performed with an attitude of discrimination are impure, temporary, and

characterized by non- dharma.

42. What bene t is there in notions of "mine" and "other"? How much value is there in dharma [systems] that are harmful to oneself and others? [Such systems] are actually non- dharma because they are harmful to oneself, in ict su ering on others, and cause Your displeasure.

43. Your principles, which you established by means of the

Bhāgavata dharma, do not change. The Āryans, who see no di erences between the multitude of moving and non-moving

entities, worship You.

44. After seeing You, all the sins of men are destroyed, O Bhagavān.

This has always been the case. Even a pukkaśa tribesman, after hearing Your name once, is freed from saṁsāra.

45. Therefore, O Bhagavān, today we have had all the impurities in our minds wiped away by seeing You. How could that which was

spoken by Your devotee the celestial sage Nārada turn out to be otherwise?

46. O Unlimited One, Soul of the Universe, everything performed by

people in this world is known to You. What is there that can possibly be revealed to the Supreme Guru, just as what can be revealed to the sun by re ies?

47. Reverence to You, Bhagavān, the Lord of creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe. The true nature of Your Being cannot be understood by imperfect yogīs because of their seeing things as di erent [from You].

48. The creators of the worlds are animated when You breathe, and

when You perceive, their organs of perception awake to perception.

The sphere of the universe appears like a mustard seed upon the head of Śeṣa. To Him, the Being with a thousand heads, I o er reverence.’”

49. Śrī Śuka said:

“Bhagavān Ananta was pleased when He was glori ed in this way,

and spoke to Citraketu, the Lord of the vidyādharas, O upholder of the Kuru dynasty.

50. Śrī Bhagavān said:

‘You have attained perfection by accepting the teachings about Me

delivered to you by Nārada and Aṅgirā, as well as by following that

technique, and also by seeing Me.

51. I am the soul of all beings, and I cause the welfare of all beings.

I am śabda-Brahman [the Veda] and the Supreme para-Brahman.

These are both My eternal forms.

52. The ātman infuses the world, and the world envelops the ātman.

Both of them are pervaded by Me, and both are created in Me.

53. This is just like a person deeply sleeping who sees the whole universe in himself, but, upon waking, realizes that his self is only

situated in one place.

54. Such is the case with the ātman: when one realizes that the jīva’s states of consciousness, such as wakefulness, etc., are expressions of

māyā (illusion), then one should remain xed in the knowledge that the seer is transcendent to these states.

55. Know me to be that ātman, by dint of whom the puruṣa understands the dream to be his when in the state of dreaming. 54 I am Brahman, bliss, beyond the guṇas.

56. That awareness of both the states of dream and of awakening for

a person remembering them, which pervades and goes beyond

them, is Brahman, the Supreme.

57. It is due to the forgetfulness of this My nature that saṁsāra exists for a person who thinks of himself as separate. It is because of

this forgetfulness that a person undergoes body after body, and death after death.

58. After having attained a human birth where there is the

possibility of knowledge and wisdom, if one does not awaken to the

ātman, one does not obtain any [ultimate] bene t [from this birth].

59. Keeping in mind the hardships [accruing from chasing] desires

in this world, of the contrary results that arise from them, and of the

freedom from fear that comes from not pursuing them, a sage

should desist from desires.

60. A husband and wife perform actions for the sake of happiness

and to avoid unhappiness. But there is neither the cessation of unhappiness nor the attainment of happiness from this.

61.–62. Realizing in this way the opposite results attained by those

people who think themselves clever, and realizing the subtle nature

of the ātman, which transcends the three states [of waking, sleep, and deep sleep], and freed by one's own willpower from sense

objects whether seen or heard about, a person should become My devotee and take satisfaction in knowledge and wisdom.

63. This is what is to be known as the true self-interest of those who

have taken a human birth: perceiving with all one's being the

oneness of the ātman with that Supreme. This perception is attained by means of skillful intelligence and the practice of yoga.

64. By contemplating these words of mine, O King, with faith and

without confusion, you will quickly become perfected with

knowledge and realization.’”

65. Śrī Śuka said:

“As king Citraketu, who had been inspired in this way, was

watching, Hari, Bhagavān, who is the Guru of the universe and soul of everything, disappeared from there.”

Book VII

The Teachings of Yamarāja: Lament of the Widowed Queens

Yoga Blueprint *This pithy story, which contains a fable within it, illustrates the futility of grieving for a deceased loved one, given that the body is still present, while the soul had never been perceived in the rst place. The teachings also stress the importance of accepting one’s karma .*

Book VII, Chapter 2

27. People recite this ancient legend (itihāsa); it involves a conversation between Yama and the relatives of a dead person.

Please listen to it.

28. There was a renowned king called Suyajña in a kingdom called

Uśīnara, who was killed by his enemies in battle. His relatives gathered round his body.

29. His jewel-laden armor was shattered, and his garland and

ornaments were in disarray. He was lying covered in blood, his heart pierced by arrows.

30. His hair was scattered, his eyes glazed, and his lip bitten in fury.

His lotus face was darkened with dust and his arms and weapons had been severed in the battle.

31. The lord of the Uśīnara kingdom had been reduced to this state

by Fate. His queens were distraught upon seeing him. "Our lord has

been killed," they said. Beating their chests forcefully with their sts again and again, they fell at the feet of the king.

32. Crying loudly, the poor queens bathed his lotus feet with their tears, reddened with the kuṅkuma powder from their breasts, their ornaments and hair in disarray. They wailed, invoking people's pity

by their laments.

33. "Aho! O lord, you have been taken away from our sight by cruel Fate. You, who were previously the maintainer of the citizens of Uśīnara, have now been reduced to the source of their lamentation.

34. How will we exist without you, our dear friend and guide, O

great king? Tell us the means of following your steps, O hero, to wherever you will go. We are your faithful servants."

35. The queens, embracing their husband and lamenting in this way,

were resisting carrying away the dead body; then the sun nished

setting.

36. After hearing such lamentation by the relatives of the dead man,

Yama, the god of death, assumed the form of a young [orphan] boy

and personally came there. He addressed the queens.

37. Śrī Yama said: "Aho! Just see the bewilderment of these queens who are mature in age, even though they know the laws of nature.

These queens lament uselessly, even though they themselves are

bound by the same rules. This dead man has gone back to wherever

he came.

38. Aho! We ourselves are most fortunate, because even though we were abandoned by our parents, we are not in anxiety. Even though

we are weak, we have not been devoured by wolves and wild

animals. That Being who protects us in the womb, will protect us now.

39. Out of His desire, that imperishable Lord creates this universe,

and He protects and dissolves it. They say that this is the play of that Lord, O women! He is the Controller in the coming together and dissolution of moving and non-moving beings.

40. In some cases, even if fallen by the roadside, one lives when protected by Fate, in others, even if safely situated at home, one

meets destruction when neglected by Fate. An orphan in the jungle survives when protected by Fate, while one secure at home does not

live when struck by Fate.

41. Without exception, living bodies appear and then disappear in

time in accordance with their respective karma and particular births.

Although embedded in prakṛti, the ātman is completely di erent, and is not actually bound by its guṇas.

42. This body made of material elements is produced by illusion and

is di erent from the puruṣa, just as a person is di erent from a house made of earth, water, and re. A person is born, undergoes

some changes, and then dies in due course of time.

43. Just as re manifests in pieces of wood but is di erent from them; and just as air enters the body but exists distinct from it; and

just as the sky, which is omnipresent, is not tainted by anything; so

a being, who is the support of all the guṇas is yet transcendent to them.

44. O foolish people! That Suyajña for whom you lament still lies

here. But [the consciousness of] the one who was the hearer and the

responder was never perceived in the rst place. 1

45. The primary life air in the body, even though essential, is also

not the hearer or responder. It is the ātman who is the possessor of the senses, and it is di erent from the body and life airs.

46. By its own potency, the omnipresent ātman possesses bodies in higher and lower births characterized by mind, senses, and material

elements but yet is di erent from them.

47. For as long as the ātman is connected with the subtle body, it is bound by karma. As a result, it is subject to error, defects (kleśas), and the in uence of māyā.

48. This ego, which perceives and speaks of objects in the guṇas, is illusory. It is like a dream, which is a mental concoction. All things

made of the material elements are false.

49. Those who understand the truth do not lament for anything in this world, whether permanent or impermanent. But the nature of

those who lament is to say, ‘It is not possible to do anything other

than lament.’

50. Once upon a time, some hunter—the harbinger of death to birds

—spread out his nets and placed them about in the forest, setting

bait here and there.

51. He saw a pair of kuliṅga birds wandering about there. The female one of them was suddenly allured by the hunter.

52. She became trapped, O queens, bound by Fate in the cords of

the net. The male kuliṅga bird, seeing her fallen into this calamity, was greatly aggrieved out of a ection. Unable to do anything, the

poor thing lamented for his poor mate: 53. ‘ Aho! Fate is cruel. What will the Supreme Lord do with me, an unfortunate soul, and with

my poor wife who is so kind she is lamenting for me?

54. Let Fate take me as it pleases. What is the use of living miserably with only half of myself? There will only be su ering from such a bereaved life.

55. My poor o spring are awaiting me in the nest. How will I maintain the chicks, whose wings have not yet grown, now they

have been bereft of their mother?’

56. Propelled by the Time factor, the hunter had hidden nearby.

While the kuliṅga bird was lamenting in this way, its throat choked up with tears due to being a icted by this separation from its beloved, the fowler pierced it with an arrow.

57. In the same way, you queens will not get your husband back even if you lament for hundreds of years; meanwhile you are

foolishly not perceiving your own imminent death."

58. While the young boy was discoursing in this way, all the

relatives' minds were struck with astonishment. They realized that

everything is temporary and situated in unreality.

59. After Yama had imparted these instructions, he disappeared from there. Then the relatives of King Suyajña performed the

funerary ceremonials.

60. Therefore, free from bodily ignorance in the form of clinging (abhiniveśa2) to notions of self and other—such as "Who am I and who is other?" or "What is mine, here, and what belongs to

others?"—you should not lament for your own body or anyone

else's.

The Tale of Child Prahlāda: Viṣṇu Protects His Bhaktas

Yoga Blueprint *The story of Prahlāda is one of the best-known bhakta stories in Hinduism. As with Dhruva, Prahlāda was a child bhakta , in addition to which he was born into a family of asuras (demons). This once again underscores the principle that neither age nor birth nor any other factor disquali es one from the path of bhakti . In fact, the text selects Prahlāda to formally articulate the nine practices that form the core of vaidhī bhakti discussed in part 1. Signi cant here is Prahlāda advising his fellow boy students not to fritter away even a moment of human life, but to start thinking about the purpose of life even as children.*

We nd here another example of the Bhāgavata's disinterest in the standard goal of yoga— realization of the ātman (VII.6.25), not to mention any sort of more mundane blessings, even if o ered by Viṣṇu himself (VII.9.55). But

we nd in this passage, too, a second reason Prahlāda is disinterested in liberation. We know that one of the Bhāgavata 's repeated subthemes is the promotion of immersing the mind in Īśvara as being far more blissful than awareness being absorbed in its own nature, which is why bhaktas reject the standard goals of yoga . But Prahlāda expresses disinterest in liberation not just because of the greater experience of bliss for oneself, but because it entails abandoning other living entities to su er in saṁsāra (VII.9.44). In this, he exempli es an attitude often associated with the Boddhisattva in Buddhism. Of signi cance, too, is that the passage makes a dismissive comment about those who teach and perform the various activities associated with yoga and the like simply to make a living.

[This narrative is recounted to King Yuddhiṣṭhira by sage Nārada.]

Book VII, Chapter 4

30. Hiraṇyakaśipu had four very wonderful sons. On account of his qualities, Prahlāda was the greatest of these. He was a worshipper of the Supreme.

31. He was devoted to the brāhmaṇas, endowed with good character, committed to Truth, had controlled senses, and acted as the well-wisher and best friend to all beings, as if they were his own self.

32. Toward Āryans (cultured people) he was dutiful, like a servant; toward the needy, he was kind, like a father; toward equals, he was a ectionate, like a brother; and toward teachers, he had a respectful attitude. Although he was blessed with learning, wealth, beauty, and good birth, he was without any sense of pride or arrogance.

33. His mind was not disturbed in calamities, and he was free of cravings—both of things he had experienced and of those he had heard about—as he perceived the ephemeral nature of the guṇas that produce them. His senses, life air, body, and intelligence were always controlled and his desires appeased. Although an asura, demon [by birth], he did not possess [the qualities] of the asuras.

34. The great qualities found in Prahlāda are constantly being

glori ed by poets—they have not been forgotten [by Time] even up

to today—just as is the case with the qualities of Bhagavān, Īśvara.

35. Even the sūras, celestials, who are enemies [of Prahlāda's lineage of asuras], pay homage to him, O king—not to mention others such as your good self.

36. He had innate devotion for Bhagavān Vāsudeva. From his innumerable qualities, this much alone is enough to indicate his greatness.

37. As a child, he was not interested in toys, and acted like a simpleton, on account of his mind being absorbed in God. His mind

appeared possessed [as if] by the planet Kṛṣṇa, [3] and so he did not perceive the world as it is conventionally perceived.

38. While sitting, wandering about, eating, lying down, drinking, and eating, he was not consciously planning these [activities], as he

was in the embrace of Govinda [Kṛṣṇa].

39. Sometimes his mind would become pervaded by anxiety for

Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, and he would cry. Sometimes he

would laugh from joy at thoughts of Him, and sometimes he would

burst into song.

40. Sometimes he would yell at the top of his voice, sometimes he would dance without shame. At other times, his mind xed on Kṛṣṇa, he identi ed with Him so much that he imitated His activities.

41. Sometimes he remained silent, his hair standing on end in ecstasy. At such times, experiencing bliss from contact with the Lord, his eyes lled with tears of joy and love and remained xed and unblinking.

42. Continuously radiating with internal ecstasy attained through service to the lotus feet of Viṣṇu and through the association of devotees who desire nothing for themselves, Prahlāda bestowed peace of mind on those who were miserable due to keeping bad company.

43. Hiraṇyakaśipū in icted violence on Prahlāda, his own son, who was a great illustrious soul and bhāgavata devotee.

44. Śrī Yuddhiṣṭhīra said: "O celestial sage! We wish to understand from you, who are true to your vows, how the father in icted harm on his own son, a pure saddhu (saint).

45. Fathers are a ectionate to their own sons, and only reproach them if they are disobedient with the goal of imparting a lesson— never to harm them as if they were an enemy!

46. This should be all the more so for obedient saintly sons like Prahlāda, who respect their teachers as gods, O master. Please dispel

this curiosity of mine, O brāhmaṇa: What animosity impelled a father to take the life of a son?"

Book VII, Chapter 5

1. Śrī Nārada replied: "The great Kāvya (Śukrācārya) was selected by the asuras (demons) as the chief priest (purohita). His two sons, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, lived near the palace of the daitya (demon)4

king.

2. They instructed various courses of learning to the boy Prahlāda,

who was already well behaved. Along with other young asura boys, Prahlāda had been entrusted to them by the king.

3. Whatever was taught by the teacher there, Prahlāda heard and repeated, but in reality he did not accept the teachings in his mind,

as they were grounded in the illusion of 'mine' and 'other.'5

4. One day, O son of Pāṇḍu, the king of the asuras seated his son on his lap, and asked: 'Tell me what you think is good, my son.'

5. Śrī Prahlāda said: 'The minds of embodied beings are beset with anxieties because of being captured by illusion, O best of the asuras.

What I think is good is that they renounce the blind well of the

household,6 which causes the downfall of the soul, and go to the forest, where they can take shelter of Hari.'"

6. Śrī Nārada said: "When he heard the words of his son, which resonated with those of the enemy [the sūras, celestials, who are favorable to Viṣṇu] the daitya laughed: 'The minds of the boys have been in uenced by the views of the enemy.

7. The boy should be kept apart in the house of the guru, so that his intelligence does not become in uenced by brāhmaṇas favorable to Viṣṇu

from the other side in disguise.'

8. When Prahlāda had been brought back to their home, the daitya's priests summoned him and attered him with slippery words. Then

they asked in reassuring tones: 9. 'Prahlāda, dear boy! May you be

blessed! Now, speak truthfully, do not tell lies: From where did this

misguided idea come to you? It is beyond the normal

comprehension of young boys.

10. O joy of your lineage, has this disturbance in your understanding been caused by someone else, or was it just

spontaneous? Tell us—we your teachers are eager to hear.'

11. Śrī Prahlāda said: 'Reverence to that Bhāgavan, by whose māyā

the false conception of "mine" and "other" manifests in people. It is

seen in those who have deluded intelligence.

12. This beastlike understanding of "that person is di erent from me, and I am di erent from him" is destroyed when He is favorably

disposed to people. It is a false understanding, a petty attitude that

makes distinctions.

13. It is Bhāgavan who has "disturbed my understanding." He is actually the ātman, which is misperceived because of false understanding of "mine" and "other." His ways are unfathomable—

the reciters of the Vedas and all beings from Brahmā down are bewildered about his ways.

14. Just as iron moves itself when in the vicinity of a magnet, O

brāhmaṇa, so in the same way my consciousness is disturbed according to the will of Viṣṇu, the wielder of the cakra discus.’”

15. Śrī Nārada said: “After speaking these words to the brāhmaṇa, the high-minded Prahlāda fell silent. Then that wretched servant of

the king, furious, threatened him: 16. ‘You are bringing disrepute to

us. The fourth method, punishment, [7] has been prescribed in the sacred texts for a fool who acts like a rebrand in the family lineage. Bring us the rod!

17. This boy is like a thorn tree born in the forest of sandalwood of

the daityas. He is the handle of the axe of Viṣṇu who [wishes] to fell us at the roots.’

18. In this way the demon brāhmaṇa intimidated Prahlāda through

threats and various other such means. Then he made him learn the

philosophy behind the rst three goals of life (righteousness,

material well-being, and sense grati [cation).8]

19. After this, the teacher ensured that the boy learned the fourfold things to be known [by kings—namely, paci cation, bribery, divide

and rule, and punishment]. He then brought him forward, washed

and decorated by his mother, to the daitya king once again.

20. Prahlāda bent low at his feet, and the asura welcomed the boy with blessings. Embracing him for a long time with his arms, the king felt intense pleasure.

21. Seating upon his lap his son whose face was beaming, he kissed

his head, wetting it with his tear drops. Then he spoke as follows to

his son.

22. Hiraṇyakaśipu said: ‘O Prahlāda, my son, may you live long. Tell

me something about the highest learning from whatever you have

studied from your teacher over the course of time up to now.’

23.–24. Prahlāda replied: ‘The nine characteristics of bhakti that people can o er to Viṣṇu are: hearing about Him, singing about Him, remembering Him, serving His feet, worshipping Him,

glorifying Him, considering oneself His servant, considering oneself

His friend, and surrendering completely to Him. When these are

o ered to Bhagavān, then I think this to be the highest learning.’

25. Upon hearing these words of his son, Hiraṇyakaśipu’s lip

trembled, and he said as follows to the son of his guru: 26. ‘You excuse for a brāhmaṇa. What is this that you have done by deceitfully siding with the enemy? You have disrespected me, and

caused this boy to learn nonsense, you fool!

27. There are dishonest persons in the world—untrue friends

wearing false garb. Their deception reveals itself in the course of time, just like a disease does in sinful people.’

28. The son of the guru replied: ‘He was not taught this by me, nor was he taught by anyone else. This son of yours, O enemy of Indra,

says that this understanding of his is innate. Control your anger, O

king, do not lay the blame on us.’”

29. Śrī Nārada said: “After receiving this reply from the teacher, the asura again spoke to his son: ‘If these ideas did not come from the mouth of your teacher, then whose perverse opinion is it, you

wretched boy?’

30. Śrī Prahlāda said: ‘For those who have taken vows of commitment to householder life, an understanding of Kṛṣṇa is not attained either from someone else, nor spontaneously, nor from

reciprocal dealings among each other. Such people are chewing

again and again that which has already been chewed, and end up

entering a hellish condition because of their uncontrolled senses.

31. Those who seek the goal of life externally, their hearts tainted

[by desire], do not understand Viṣṇu to be the goal of their real self-interest. They are like blind people being led by the blind; but they

are nonetheless still constrained by the formidable ropes of the Lord’s laws.

32. Until such people make the decision to bathe their minds in the

dust of the feet of the great sel ess devotees, their understanding will never be able to touch the lotus feet of Viṣṇu. These have the

quality of eliminating all contamination [from the heart].’

33. No sooner had Prahlāda nished speaking than Hiraṇyakaśipu

hurled his son from his lap onto the ground, his mind blinded with

fury.

34. Consumed with indignation and fury, his eyes turning red, he cried: ‘Demons! Let this doomed person be executed. Take him

away!

35. This o ensive boy is [to all intents and purposes] the killer of

my brother as he worships Viṣṇu, the killer of his uncle, 9 like a servant. He has abandoned his own well-wishers.

36. If, at ve years of age, he has rejected the a ection of his father, which is so hard to renounce, then what good will this useless fellow be able to do for Viṣṇu?

37. The [o spring of] another person, if he or she acts in one's interest, can be considered one's own child—just like medicine. But

even one's own child, if not acting in one's interest, is like a disease.

One should cut o that [diseased] limb for one's own interest so that the rest [of the body] can live happily after it has been severed.

38. An enemy masquerading as a friend is like an uncontrolled sense

for a sage. He should be killed by any means—whether he is eating,

lying down, or sitting.'

39.–40. Those demons had erce teeth, cruel faces, copper beards and hair, and bore tridents in their hands. Commanded by their lord, they attacked Prahlāda in all his vital places with their tridents uttering terrifying roars and yelling: 'Cut him! Pierce him!'

41. But these were ine ective on Prahlāda, who had his mind xed

on Bhagavān, the Soul of everything, the Supreme imperceptible Brahman.

42. When all the attempts proved futile, the king of the daityas became greatly alarmed, and made further murderous attempts with

determination, O Yudhiṣṭhira.

43.–44. When the asura could not kill his innocent son by means of elephants, serpents, sorcery, hurling him [from high places], magic,

con nement, administering poison, food deprivation, ice, wind, re,

water, or hurling boulders at him, he became completely distraught.

He could not nd a means to accomplish this goal.

45. ‘This boy has been verbally abused by me, and I devised various

means to murder him; but he freed himself from all those lethal attempts by his own power.

46. Although he is only a boy, this one is very intelligent and will

not forget my non-Āryan (uncivilized) behavior, just like

Śunaḥśepa.10 He is powerful, and he is living with me, not in some distant place.

47. This boy is invulnerable, and fears nothing. His power is

immeasurable. He will certainly be the bearer of my death for being

his enemy—or perhaps he will not.’

48. Hiraṇyakaśipu’s downcast face became haggard on account of

anxiety. Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the two sons of Śukra, the guru of the demons, spoke to him in private: 49. ‘The three worlds were

conquered by you single-handedly. All the regions of the celestials

were thrown into turmoil just by your frown. We do not see

anything to worry about from Prahlāda, O master. There are no

grounds [to fear] the good or bad qualities of children.

50. Bind this boy with the bonds of Varuṇa, 11 and keep him so that he does not ee away in fear until Śukra, the guru of the Bhārgava clan arrives. The intelligence of people matures with age, and

through rendering service to Āryans.'

51. 'Do just that,' Hiraṇyakaśipu said, accepting the words of his guru's sons. 'And make sure that the dharma of kings who are householders is taught to him.'

52. So they taught everything about appropriate behavior, material

gain, and sense indulgence (dharma, artha, and kāma) in proper order to Prahlāda, O king. Prahlāda remained humble and obedient.

53. During the instruction of these three topics to him by his teachers, Prahlāda never considered them to be the real truth, as they are prescribed for those who delight in dualities.

54. When the teacher went back to his home to attend to his

household duties, Prahlāda was called by the young boys at the school of his same age. They had been waiting for the moment.

55. The wise Prahlāda replied to them with sweet words. Smiling,

he spoke to them kindly, knowing their devotion to him.

56. Out of their respect for him, all the boys put aside their toys and

play paraphernalia. Their intelligence had not been polluted by the

words and actions of those [in ignorance] who delight in dualities.

57. They surrounded Prahlāda, O king, xing him in their eyes and

hearts. That great bhāgavata devotee, although an asura, was a friend to all. He spoke to them kindly."

Book VII, Chapter 6

1. Śrī Prahlāda said: "A wise person should practice the dharma of Bhagavān from childhood. A human birth is rare, and even though it is temporary, it can bestow the true goal of life.

2. Therefore, a person born into this world should approach the feet

of Viṣṇu: He is one's Īśvara, the dearest friend, and beloved of all beings.

3. O sons of demons! The sensual pleasures of embodied beings are

available everywhere without endeavor. They arise naturally from

the connection with the body; and the same is the case with

su ering.

4. Any endeavor, which, in the nal score, leads to the complete waste of one's life, should not be pursued. This is not the way to attain one's [real] well-being—the lotus feet of Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa].

5. Therefore, a wise person who has ended up in saṁsāra should strive for this well-being while the body is still vigorous and strong

and has not deteriorated.

6. The life of a person is one hundred years. For a person whose senses are not controlled, half of this is useless, subjected to the darkness of tamas when sleeping at night.

7. For a foolish person, a further twenty years are frittered away in

childhood and boyhood engaging in play, and twenty more years

are lost when the body is seized by old age and becomes incapable.

8. For one who is deluded [about the true self] and attached to household life, the remaining balance of life is wasted in deep ignorance [of the goal

of life] by chasing desires, which are di cult

to ful ll.

9. What person is able to free the self when it is attached to the household with uncontrolled senses, bound by the strong bonds of

a ection?

10. Who, in truth, will renounce his thirst for wealth, which is dearer than life itself? Merchants, servants, and thieves barter their

dear life for wealth.

11. How can a man renounce intimate association with his

sympathetic, considerate wife and her charming words of council?

And his bonds of a ection with his friends? And what of his

attachment to his toddlers with their broken baby babble?

12. And how can one renounce thinking in one's mind of sons? And

those cherished daughters? And how about brothers, sisters, or

helpless parents? And what of homes and all one's meaningful

possessions, family occupations, herds of cattle, and servants?

13. Like a silkworm [bound in its own cocoon], one struggles to perform actions—placing great importance on the pleasures of the

tongue and genitals—but one's desires always remain unsatis ed

due to insatiable greed.

14. In delusion, one does not discern that one's own life span is ying past in the maintenance of one's family, and in the end one's

goals are brought to ruin. Delighting in one's family, one does not realize that one is beset on all sides by the threefold su erings. 12

15. One's mind is always absorbed in matters of wealth. And although knowing the negative repercussions both here and in the next world of stealing the wealth of others, the householder whose senses are uncontrolled and whose lust is never quenched, nonetheless steals.

16. Even a learned person who maintains his own family does not attain his [highest] destination, O dānavas (demons). Due to the mind-set of making distinctions between what is one's own and what is another's, he too is subject to tamas just like any deluded person is.

17. No one, anywhere, who is bound to o spring and kept like a pet for the enjoyment of sensual women is ever capable of completely freeing his own self. Such a person is helpless.

18. Therefore, O daityas (demons), one should approach Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme God, keeping at a distance the daityas whose minds are absorbed in sense grati cations. It is He who is the liberation sought for by those who are freed from all attachments.

19. O sons of the asuras (demons), it does not take a great e ort to please Acyuta [Kṛṣṇa]. It can be accomplished in so many ways. He is the innermost soul of all beings.

20.–21. There is one Supreme Ātman, Bhagavān, the imperishable Īśvara, who exists in all higher and lower beings from Brahmā to the immovable entities [like plants]. He is in the material elements and

in the transformations of the material elements starting with the mahat [the rst transformation of prakṛti]. He is the guṇas themselves, He is the guṇas when they are in equilibrium, and He is the guṇas when they are mixed into activity.

22. Through Himself in the form of the inner self as the seer, and

also through taking the form of the seen,13 He is both the One who pervades and that which is pervaded. He is describable and

nondescribable. He is manifold.

23. Īśvara, the Supreme Lord, has a form, which is pure bliss and consciousness. His power is concealed within Himself through His māyā. He causes creation through māyā's guṇas.

24. Because of all this, show kindness and friendliness to all living

beings. Give up the demoniac mind-set of the asuras so that Viṣṇu might be pleased.

25. When the unlimited original Being is satis ed, what remains unattained? What is the use of the four goals of life, dharma, etc., which accrue of their own accord [due to past karma] through the permutations of His guṇas? What is the use of the liberated state beyond the guṇas, even though it is so desired, to us who are singing about His lotus feet and relishing their blissfulness?

26. What use is the group of three prescriptions outlined in the sacred texts, dharma, artha, and mokṣa; spiritual knowledge; study of the three Vedas; logic; polity and justice; and the various

livelihoods? I consider the truth of all of these and of everything in

the sacred texts to be the dedication of oneself to the Supreme Person. It is He who is one's true friend.

27. In actual fact it was Nārāyaṇa, the friend of living beings, who

spoke to Nārada this very same knowledge. It is free from error and

hard to obtain. This knowledge is meant for those whose bodies are

smeared with the dust of the lotus feet of Bhagavān— those who have given up everything and are exclusively devoted to Him.

28. This pure Bhāgavata dharma combines knowledge with

experienced realized wisdom. I heard it from Nārada, who always has visions of Lord Viṣṇu."

29. The sons of the daityas said: "Prahlāda, you, just like us, do not know any guru other than the two sons of Sukrācārya, the guru of the daitya demons. They are the masters of us boys.

30. Association with a great soul [like Nārada] is di cult to attain

for a young boy like you who has always resided in the inner chamber of the palace. [So how could you have been taught by

him?] Remove this doubt of ours with some evidence so as to gain

our con dence, O gentle Prahlāda."

Book VII, Chapter 7

1. Śrī Nārada said: "Questioned in this way by the sons of the daityas, the great asura devotee of Bhagavān replied to them, smiling, as he remembered what I had previously told him.

2. Śrī Prahlāda said: 'After our father Hiraṇyakaśipu had departed to perform austerity (tapas)[14] on Mount Mandara, the celestials undertook a major expedition against the demons.

3. Indra and the celestials were saying: “By good fortune, this sinful

person, the scourge of the universe, has been devoured by his own

sins, like a snake devoured by large black ants.”

4. After observing the enormous expedition against them, the army

commanders of the demons ed in all directions, terri ed of the gods. They were being slaughtered.

5. Desperate to stay alive, all of them in their desperate haste turned their backs on wives, sons, wealth, friends, homes, livestock, and possessions.

6. The immortals ransacked the king’s residence, intent on victory.

Then Indra seized the king’s queen, my mother.

7. By chance, the sage of the celestials, Nārada, happened there and

saw her being carried away, trembling in fear, like a kurarī osprey bird.

8. Nārada said: “Indra, you are chief of the gods and blessed with

good fortune. You should not take this innocent woman, given in marriage to another man. She is a chaste woman: release her,

release her!”

9. Śrī Indra replied: “In her womb lies the semen of the enemy of the gods, who [will become] unconquerable. Let her remain [with

us] until she gives birth, then I will release her, once I have accomplished my intention [of killing the child].”

10. Śrī Nārada replied: “This child is sinless, and he is a great and eminent devotee of Bhagavān. As a powerful devotee of the unlimited Viṣṇu, he will not meet his end by your hand.”

11. Addressed in this way, Indra obeyed the words of the celestial

sage and released her. He respectfully circumambulated her out of

devotion for the dear devotees of the unlimited Lord Viṣṇu, and returned to the celestial realm.

12. Then the sage brought my mother to his own āśrama hermitage.

“Stay here safely, child, until the return of your husband,” he said.

13. “I will do so,” she said, and lived in the safekeeping of the divine sage with no fear from any quarter until the Lord of the demons had ful lled his erce austerities (tapas).

14. That chaste pregnant lady served the sage with utmost devotion

for the protection of her embryo and for [the boon of being able to]

give birth when she herself so desired.

15. The powerful sage was very kindhearted and bestowed upon her both these wishes. He imparted knowledge and the truth of dharma

to her and also to me [within her womb].

16. Due to the long time that has elapsed since then … my mother’s

memory has not retained those instructions. But, since I was blessed

by the sage in this regard, mine has not been lost up till today.

17. If you have faith in my words it may come to pass that you will

also gain insight into Truth, just as happened to me, who had faith,

and as it can happen to women or children.

18. The six transformations consisting of birth, existence, growth, change, dwindling, and death are visible in the body—just as they

are in the fruits of a tree. This is because of Time, a manifestation of Īśvara. But they do not occur in the ātman.

19. The ātman is eternal, undecaying, pure, individual, the knower of prakṛti, the support, changeless, self-conscious, the cause, and the pervader. It is autonomous and uncovered [by māyā].

20. Through [understanding] these twelve characteristics of the

ātman, a wise person should renounce unreal notions pertaining to the body such as "I," and "me." These are born from ignorance.

21. Just as an expert goldsmith can attain gold from rocks in the elds through various processes, so a knower of the ātman attains the goal of brahman from the body in the eld of prakṛti through the processes of yoga.

22. The great teachers have spoken of eight prakṛtis, the three guṇas

[underpinning them] , and sixteen transformations. But there is one entity [soul] alone, who underpins them all. 15

23. The collection of all these together comprise the bodies of living

beings. These are of two kinds: moving and non-moving. It is from

within the body that the puruṣa is to be sought through eliminating that which is di erent from it: "It is not this, It is not this." 16

24. Through the process of positive and negative concomitance; 17

through discrimination; through a keen mind; and through mature

re ection on the processes of birth, maintenance, and destruction,

[the ātman is to be sought].

25. The states (vṛttis) of the intelligence (buddhi) are said to be wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep. 18 The one who is beyond these

—the witness by whom these states are perceived—is the puruṣa.

26. Just as one becomes aware of the air by means of the smells that

pervade it [even though the pure air molecules are di erent from the smells that pervade it], so, in the same way, one should become

aware of the presence19 of the ātman by means of the various intelligences covering it [even though the pure ātman is di erent from the intelligence it pervades]. These various intelligences

function in di ering ways in accordance with the three guṇas.

27. The bonds of action produced by the guṇas are the gate of saṁsāra. These are without reality and are the root of ignorance, like a dream superimposed on a person [when asleep].

28. Therefore, you should uproot the seeds of karma, which are products of the three guṇas. Yoga is the means to stop the outward ow of the intelligence.

29. Of the thousands of methods [of yoga], the one spoken by Nārada is the one by which love for Īśvara, Bhagavān, quickly arises.

30.–31. [This love is achieved] by serving the guru, by bhakti, by o ering all that one attains, by association with sādhu saints and bhakta devotees, by worshipping Īśvara, by faith in the narrations about Him, by the glori cation of His deeds and qualities (kīrtana), by meditation on His lotus feet, and by worshipping His deity forms.

32. Hari, Bhagavān, is the Īśvara within all living beings. Thinking in this way, one should wish all beings well in one's mind, along with

their aspirations.

33. In this way, one should perform bhakti to Īśvara, Bhagavān, Vāsudeva, with the group of six—lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride,

and envy—under control. It is in this way that love [for Īśvara] is attained.

34. When one hears of the deeds, incomparable qualities, and heroic feats performed in the bodies Īśvara assumes for his līlā pastimes, then, with head held high, one dances, shouts, and sings in a voice

broken up with tears, and with hair bristling in ecstasy.

35. In this state, as if possessed by a spirit, one sometimes laughs,

sometimes weeps, sometimes meditates, and sometimes o ers

respect to people. Breathing heavily, with one's mind absorbed in the ātman and without any inhibitions, one repeatedly cries out,

"Hari," "Lord of the Universe," "Nārāyaṇa."

36. In this state, a person is freed from all bondage. Through meditation, one's body and mind are in complete accord with the will of Īśvara. The reactions of all seeds of karma are burned through complete dedication to bhakti, and one is then united with Kṛṣṇa (Adhokṣaja).

37. The end of the cycle of saṁsāra occurs for the embodied being whose mind has become puri ed from connection with Kṛṣṇa

(Adhokṣaja). The wise know this as the bliss of brahman-nirvāṇa.

Therefore, worship in your heart Īśvara, the Lord of the heart.

38. Is it really such a great e ort to worship Hari, O sons of asuras?

He is one's very self, existing in one's heart as a friend, like space

[exists within everything]. What is the use of acquiring the objects

of the senses, which are so commonly available to any living being?

39. Wealth, wife, livestock, sons and daughters, homes, land, elephants, treasuries, power, and all objects of desire are eeting. What joy can these bring to a mortal whose life can be shattered in an instant?

40. The same is true of those celestial worlds, which are attained by the performance of Vedic ritualistic sacri ces: although superior [to this world], they are not perfect, since they are also subject to destruction. Therefore, to attain the ātman, worship Īśvara, the Supreme Being, by means of the bhakti that has been described—no faults have ever been perceived or heard of in Īśvara!

41. For the sake of sense enjoyment in this world, a person, thinking himself knowledgeable, performs actions, but he or she invariably obtains the opposite outcome [su ering].

42. The intention of one engaged in action is to attain happiness and avoid distress in this world—but one always ends up miserable because of desire. One is fully content, on the other hand, when free of desire.

43. Motivated by desire, a person desires objects of desire for this body. But this body actually belongs to others [that is, the elements]. Being perishable, it comes and goes [changing from life to life].

44. How much more, then, things separate from the body such as

children, wife, home, and wealth, etc.? And not to mention

kingdom, treasury, elephants, ministers, servants, and friends? All of

these perpetuate the ego.

45. What is the value to the ātman of these tri ing things, along with the perishable body? The ātman is an ocean of eternal relishable bliss. These things are useless, even though they take on

the guise of being desirable.

46. Anyone who bears a material body should re ect carefully on the nature of true self-interest in this world given that one is su ering in various conditions since one's insemination in the womb

because of deeds performed in the past, O asuras.

47. Because of lack of insight (viveka), an embodied being engages in activities with the body according to the dictates of the mind, but

then must accept future bodies and minds as a consequence of those

activities.

48. Therefore, even though wealth, desire, and dharma are dependent on Īśvara, Hari [and thus easily available to His bhaktas], worship Him without desire. He is the [Supreme] desireless Ātman.

49. Hari is Īśvara, the friend of all beings. The bodies of all beings are created by the ve great elements, and these are created by

Him. He is known as [existing within] the jīva.

50. Whether one is a celestial, a human, a yakṣa, or gandharva, one will become auspicious by worshipping the lotus feet of Mukunda

[Kṛṣṇa], just as I have become.

51. O sons of the asuras! Being a brāhmaṇa, or celestial, or sage is not su cient to please Mukunda; nor is virtuous conduct or great

knowledge.

52. Nor is wealth, or austerity, or cleanliness, or vows. Hari is pleased by pure bhakti. Anything else is just show.

53. Therefore, O descendants of Danu, perform bhakti to Bhagavān, Hari, who is the Īśvara of the ātman of all beings, by [considering]

everyone to be equal to your own self.

54. It is [in this way] that the daityas, the y akṣas, and rākṣasas (demons), women, villagers, birds, beasts, and sinful beings have attained the liberated state.

55. It is this that has been recorded in the Smṛti sacred texts as the supreme self-interest of a person in this world: exclusive devotion to

Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], which consists of seeing Him in all beings and in

all things.’”

Book VII, Chapter 8

1. Śrī Nārada said: “After hearing the teaching delivered by Prahlāda, all the sons of the daitya demons accepted it, because of its faultless nature. But they did not accept what was taught by their

other teachers.

2. At this, seeing them absorbed in one-pointed meditation [upon Hari], the son of Śukrācārya became alarmed and immediately

informed the king of the situation.

3. His limbs trembling due to being possessed by rage,

Hiraṇyakaśipu made up his mind to kill his son. He hurled abusive

words at Prahlāda, who did not deserve this.

4. Hiraṇyakaśipu was cruel by nature; hissing like a snake struck by a foot, he cast a sideways glance with his sinful eyes and spoke to

his son. Prahlāda was standing meekly in a humble bowed posture

with his hands joined in respect.

5. Hiraṇyakaśipu said: 'Hey, you ill-mannered stupid fool. You are

ruining my family name! You have disobeyed my order, you

obstinate wretch, and so I will today dispatch you to the abode of

Yama, god of death.

6. On what authority have you transgressed my command without

fear, you fool? The three worlds along with their deities tremble when I am angry.'

7. Śrī Prahlāda replied: 'It is He who is the strength of the strong, and not only of my strength, but of yours too and of all others, O

king. All these moving and non-moving living entities, whether high

or low, are being moved by His control.

8. He is Viṣṇu, Īśvara. He is Time. He is the essence of the senses, strength, the mind, power, and vitality (ojas). It is He indeed who is the Supreme Being who creates, impels, and destroys this universe

by means of His own powers. He is the Lord of the three guṇas.

9. You should give up this demoniac mentality of yours: there are no

enemies other than the one of a mind that has become uncontrolled

by being situated on the wrong path. Fix your mind in equanimity.

It is this equanimity that is the greatest act of worship to the unlimited Lord.

10. Some think that they have conquered the ten directions,20 even though, to begin with, they have not even conquered the six

plunderers—the mind and ve senses. Who can be an enemy to a

saintly person who has controlled his mind, who is wise, and who

sees all embodied beings equally? 'The creation of enemies is

nothing other than one's own illusions.'

11. Śrī Hiraṇyakaśipu said: 'It is obvious that you are eager to die.

You speak without any restraint, you foolish fellow: your confused

words are clearly words of those who wish to die.

12. The one of whom you spoke—who is [supposed to be] the Īśvara

of the universe rather than me—where is he? If he is everywhere,

then why is he not to be seen in this pillar here?

13. I will sever your head from your body even as you brag. Let him, this Hari, protect you now, he from whom you have sought shelter.'

14. Furiously and repeatedly berating his son, a great devotee, with

these cruel words in this manner, the great demon, who was

immensely powerful, sprang up from his splendid throne. Then he

grasped his sword and struck the pillar with his st.

15. At that very moment, a terrifying sound emanated from that pillar, which rent asunder the shell of the universe. Upon hearing that sound, which reached as far as their abodes, Brahmā and the

other celestials thought it to be the destruction of their realm, my

dear Yudhiṣṭhira.

16. As he was striding forth desiring to brutally murder his son, Hiraṇyakaśipu heard that incredible unprecedented sound, which

terri ed the leaders of his armies, who are the enemies of the celestials. But he could not locate its source in the inner chambers of

the palace.

17. In order to ful ll what His devotee had declared—to establish

[the fact of] His pervasion of all living entities—Hari manifested Himself from the pillar in the palace, assuming a most amazing form

which was neither beast nor human.

18. As he was looking all around, Hiraṇyakaśipu [beheld] that

creature emerging from the pillar: 'This incredible thing is neither a

beast nor a man,' he exclaimed. ' Aho! What is this form of a ManLion?'

[We can recall from VII.7.2. that Hiraṇyakaśipu had gone o to perform austerities, seeking immortality from Brahmā. Although Brahmā was

unable to grant this, being himself mortal, Hiraṇyakaśipu was granted boons that aimed to circumvent death in all conceivable ways. One of these was that he be killed by neither man nor beast, hence Viṣṇu's appearance as half lion half man to thwart this boon while still honoring Brahmā's word.]

19. As he was deliberating in this way, the form of Nṛsiṁha, the ManLion, appeared before him. It was absolutely terrifying.

20. He had ferocious eyes of burnt gold. His jaws were gaping and

he had a dazzling mane of hair. He had gaping fangs, a tongue with

a razor sharp tip waving to and fro like a sword, and a fearsome frowning face.

21. His ears were motionless and erect. His nostrils and mouth were

open and resembled majestic mountain caves. His gaping jaws were

terrifying and his body touched the heavens. His waist was slim, and

He had a short muscular neck and broad chest.

22. He was ecked with body hair as white as moon rays, had

hundreds of rows of arms from all sides, and was armed with claws.

He was unassailable, and caused the demons and enemies of the

celestials (daityas and dānavas) to ee on account of his extensive invincible weaponry, some of it particular to Him (the discus) and

some common to others.21

23. 'Hari has extensive māyā powers of illusion: probably this entity has been conjured up by him for my destruction. But what is the use

of this type of fanfare?' Muttering this, that elephant of a demon rushed roaring toward Nṛsiṁha armed with his club.

24. Just as an insigni cant moth falls into the re, so was that demon [consumed] in the e ulgence of Nṛsiṁha. There is nothing

particularly remarkable about this for Hari: after all, formerly [at the time of creation] He consumed the primordial tamas by means

of His own e ulgence. 22 His own abode is pure sattva.

25. After charging, that great demon furiously struck Nṛsiṁha with his club with great force. Hari, withstanding his blow, seized him along with his club as he attacked, just like Garuḍa the son of Tārkṣa, Viṣṇu's eagle carrier, seizes a serpent.

26. As he was being toyed with like Garuḍa toys with a snake, that

demon slipped out of Nṛsiṁha's grasp. The immortal celestials, who

were hiding in the clouds [witnessing all this], thought this was a

bad sign, O Yudhiṣṭhira descendant of Bharata. Although they were

rulers over all the realms of the universe, their abodes had been seized [by Hiraṇyakaśipu].

27. Freed from His grasp, the great demon's tiredness from the ght

dissipated. He took up his sword and shield and threw himself once

more with force at Hari Nṛsiṁha, thinking Him to be afraid of his

prowess.

28. With the speed of a hawk, the demon was brandishing his sword

up and down, along with his shield, which was decorated with a hundred moons, leaving no opening. Hari, who was extremely fast,

emitted a loud laugh—a rough and resounding sound—and seized

the demon, whose eyes were wide open.

29. Hari placed him on His thighs at the doorway, just as a snake

captures a mouse. Tormented by His grip, Hiraṇyakaśipu was

quivering in every limb. Then, even though Hiraṇyakaśipu's skin

could not be pierced by Indra's thunderbolt, Nṛsiṁha e ortlessly tore him apart with His nails just as Garuḍa pierces a highly venomous serpent.

30. Nṛsiṁha's eyes were wide open and di cult to look at because

of their fury. His face and mane were red and sprinkled with drops

of blood, and He was licking the sides of His gaping jaws with His

tongue, just like a lion wearing a garland of intestines after killing

an elephant.

31. Nṛsiṁha cast aside Hiraṇyakaśipu, whose lotus of a heart had been torn out by the tips of His nails. He then slaughtered all his

followers who had raised their weapons, with His claws, weapons, and nails. There were thousands of the demon's men, but Nṛsiṁha

had numerous arms.

32. The water-bearing clouds, disrupted by His mane, became

scattered, and the planets had their luster obscured by His glare.

The oceans, pounded by His breath, became agitated, and the

elephants at the cardinal points[23] experienced terror at His roar.

33. The heavens were lled with celestial vehicles scattered about

by His mane, and the earth, pressured by His foot, was pulled o its

axis. From the force of that Being, mountains sprang up. The sky and the quarters of the heavens could not shine because of His e ulgence."

[The celestials then attempt to appease Lord Nṛsiṁha.]

Book VII, Chapter 9

1. Śrī Nārada said: "With all this, Nṛsiṁha was extremely di cult to approach because of His furious countenance, and so all the

celestials and heavenly beings, with Brahmā and Śiva at the

forefront, were unable to come near Him.

2. Even Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune, who had been sent by the celestials, after witnessing that incredibly wondrous form, became fearful and could not approach Him. The form had never been seen

or described before.

3. Then Brahmā summoned Prahlāda, who was standing near him:

'My dear boy, please go and pacify the Lord, who has been enraged

by your father.'

4. 'I will do so,' said the boy. That great devotee slowly approached,

O king, and, with hands folded [in humility], o ered obeisance with

his body on the ground. 24

5. The Lord, seeing that boy fallen at the soles of His feet, was overwhelmed with kindness. He raised Prahlāda up and placed His

lotus hand on his head. That hand bestows fearlessness on those whose minds are fearful of the serpent of Time.

6. All Prahlāda's impurities were cleansed from the touch of that hand, and as a result a vision of his supreme ātman was revealed to him. Ecstatic, he placed the lotus feet of Nṛsiṁha in his heart. His

body thrilled with bliss, his eyes lled with tears, and his heart melted.

7. With gathered composure and mind completely xed on Hari,

Prahlāda o ered Him praise in a voice choked up with love, his eyes

and heart completely dedicated to Him.

8. Śrī Prahlāda said: ‘Just now Brahmā and the other celestial beings

—the host of gods, the sages, and the perfected beings—were not able to worship Hari with streams of words rich in poetic qualities—

and their nature is pure sattva. How is it possible that He allows Himself to be paci ed by me, of savage birth?

9. It seems to me that the practice of yoga, intelligence, strength, in uence, power, virility, study of sacred texts, austerity, beauty, lineage, and wealth are unhelpful in the worship of the Supreme Person. It was through bhakti that Bhagavān was satis ed by the king of the elephants.25

10. And it seems to me that a dog-eater whose life, resources, endeavors, words, and thoughts are devoted to Bhagavān is better than a brāhmaṇa endowed with the twelve characteristics of the brāhmaṇa caste, 26 who is averse to the lotus feet of Hari with the lotus navel. Such a devoted person puri es his lineage; not so one who thinks himself to be important.

11. The Lord is fully complete in His own attainments; it is certainly

not for His own personal self that He accepts worship from ignorant

people, but out of compassion. Whatever worship is o ered to

Bhagavān is ultimately for one’s own bene t, just as beautifying the face is for the bene t of the face re ected back [in the mirror].

12. Because of ignorance I have entered the creation of the guṇas (saṁsāra) into a low birth. Therefore, freed of my anxiety, I will proclaim the greatness of Īśvara to the best of my understanding with my whole being. By such glori cation, a person becomes puri ed.

13. You are the abode of sattva, yet all these celestials headed by Brahmā, who, unlike us [demons], are upholders of Your orders, are

frightened, O Lord. Surely the pastimes of Bhagavān in the form of His delightful incarnations are supposed to give happiness, welfare,

and prosperity.

14. The demon has now been killed by You, therefore restrain Your

anger. Even a saintly person rejoices in the killing of a snake or scorpion. All the worlds have now attained peace of mind and are

all waiting [for You to restrain Your wrath]: let the people

remember the form of Nṛsiṁha without feeling fearful.

15. I am not afraid of this terrifying form, with its formidable horrible fangs, frowning brows, eyes like the orbs of the sun, tongue, and horri c mouth. Nor of this garland of entrails, nor this

bloody mane, ears [erect] like posts, roar which terri es the

elephants from the cardinal points, and nail tips, which tear apart

enemies.

16. But I am afraid of the su erings of the cycle of saṁsāra, which are so horrible to endure. I am bound by my karma and so have been cast among those who devour others [owing to my demon

birth]. O wonderful being, You are compassionate to Your o spring:

when will You be pleased to summon me to Your lotus feet, the abode of liberation?

17. I am scorched [with su ering] in all kinds of bodies because of

the re of misery encountered in life. This is caused by losing pleasant things and encountering unpleasant things. Even the [so-called] remedy for su ering is yet [more] su ering. I am wandering

around this cycle of saṁsāra because of my identi cation with what

I am not [that is, with the mind and body]. O master, please tell me about the yoga of service to You.

18. Nṛsiṁha, You are the Supreme Lord and dear friend! Glorifying

the pastimes and stories recited by Brahmā about You, I will be freed from the guṇas and easily cross over all dangers in the company of the great swanlike devotees absorbed in meditation on

Your feet.

19. O Nṛsiṁha! In this world, the parents are not the [real] refuge

for the child, nor medicine for the a icted, nor a boat for a person

drowning in the ocean. For those embodied beings who are averse

to You, whatever remedy is advised for a person su ering in this world has only limited value.

20. Any being, whether higher or lower, who, according to his or

her distinct nature, is inspired to create or transform anything into

something else, by means of something, through something, from

something, because of something, for something, in whatever

manner, at any time—all of that is nothing other than a form of Your Lordship.

21. Triggered by the Time factor of the Supreme Being, māyā creates the mind by means of the guṇas. The mind, which is formed in accordance with karma, is very strong. It is inclined toward the ritualistic activity of the Vedas. [27] It is also the wheel of saṁsāra, which consists of sixteen spokes [the mind, ve organs of cognition and ve of action, and the ve subtle qualities of the senses, sound,

and so forth]. These are created by ignorance. 28 Who can overcome the mind, other than by Your grace, O unborn One?

22. You always keep the guṇas under Your personal control by Your own powers. You are Time, the power by which causes and e ects

are supervised. I have been cast by ignorance into the wheel with

sixteen spokes, and am being crushed. Bring me near to You, O

Lord; I am a devoted soul.

23. Most people desire such things as the power, opulence, and longevity of lords in all the abodes of the celestial realms, O Lord.

But I have seen how these celestials were thrown into disarray by

my father's eyebrows, contracted in scornful laughter. And even he

has been dispatched by You.

24. I know the [eeting nature] of these boons sought by embodied

beings, and so I do not desire longevity, beauty, power, or sensual

indulgence, even up to those possessed by Brahmā the creator.

These are all thrown into disarray by You in the form of all-powerful Time. Rather, please accept me into the ranks of Your personal servants.

25. What are these boons, these pleasures described in the Vedic ritualistic texts? 29 They are essentially mirages! What is this body, really? It is the womb of so many diseases. And yet even though people know all this, they do not become discouraged but attempt to satisfy the [unquenchable] re of lust with little drops of

honeylike [sense pleasures], which are anyway so di cult to attain.

26. What is my reality, O Lord, but that of a person with a nature in

rajas, born in this family of demons where tamas predominates? And what is the nature of Your compassion [in contrast]? You o ered Your mercy by placing Your lotus hand on my head, but did not do

so on that of Brahmā, Śiva, or even Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune!

27. This mentality living entities have of "inferior" and "superior"

[toward others] does not exist in Your Lordship: You are the

intimate friend of the entire world. Rather, Your grace, like the wish-ful lling tree of the celestials,30 is bestowed based on people's worship. It manifests in accordance to service rendered, not based

on notions of superior or inferior.

28. Indeed, chasing desires and pleasures, people have fallen into the snake pit of birth (sāṁsāra). And, by their association, I too was falling headlong into it. But I was saved, O Lord, by Nārada, the sage of the celestials, who took me under his wing. I am that person [he addressed in the womb]. So how can I ever abandon the service of Your devotees?

29. I think that the killing of my father was enacted to save my life,

O Unlimited One, as well as to honor the word of Your sage devotee

(Nārada). Intent on wickedness, my father seized his sword and

said: "That Īśvara of yours who is supposedly superior to me, let him defend you now as I sever your head."

30. It is none other than You alone, who are this universe. It is You

alone who remain at its beginning, middle, and end. You create this

universe—this permutation of the guṇas—through Your own māyā, and then You enter it. You manifest Yourself through those guṇas as the variegation of the universe.

31. You, O Lord, are this universe of cause and e ect, and yet Your

Lordship is also di erent from it. This notion of "this is mine" and

"that is another's" is surely meaningless illusion. When something takes its birth, maintenance, manifestation, and cessation from

something else, then it is surely nothing other than that other thing,

just as a tree is nothing other than its seed, which in turn is the same as the earth and its qualities.

32. You withdraw this universe into Your own Self. Then You lie in

the middle of the waters of dissolution,31 free of all desires, experiencing the bliss of Your own Self. Absorbed in rest within Your own Self through the power of yoga, with closed eyes, You are situated in the fourth state of consciousness, 32 unassociated with tamas or the guṇas.

33. This universe is His—that is to say, Your33—body, concealed within Yourself. You manifest forth the guṇas of prakṛti through the power of Your quality of Time. At the end of Nārāyaṇa's samādhi state, as He was lying on the waters on Ananta, 34 the great lotus manifested from His navel, like a banyan tree from its seed.

34. The sage Brahmā could not see anything apart from the lotus from which he was born. He determined that You were the seed

manifested both inside himself and also outside. But he could not nd You, even though he searched for a hundred years while he was

immersed in the waters. After all, after the sprout has grown, how

can it perceive its seed?!

35. Seated on the lotus, he became amazed at this. Then the self-born Brahmā's mind became puri ed by severe austerities

performed over a very long time and he perceived that You, O Lord,

pervaded his very self, which consists of mind, senses, and gross matter, as the most subtle essence of all, just as the quality of smell

pervades the element of earth. 35

36. Thereafter he saw the Great Being (mahā-puruṣa) endowed with thousands of faces, feet, heads, hands, thighs, noses, ears, eyes, ornaments, and weapons. This form, composed by māyā, was arranged with its [di ering parts] manifesting [in di erent portions]

of the universe.36

37. Your Lordship assumed the form of the horse-headed

incarnation, 37 and killed the two enemies of the Vedas, known as Madhu and Kaiṭabha,38 who were [manifestations of] rajas and tamas, and then returned the collection of Vedas to Brahmā. [The sages] honor this most beloved form of Yours as pure sattva.

38. In this way, You appear in the universes through Your human,

animal, sage, celestial, and sh incarnations. You destroy the

enemies of the universe and protect dharma according to what is appropriate for each yuga age. 39 In the fourth age of Kali You are concealed, and because of not being visible then, You are known as Triyuga, the Lord of the three yugas (world ages). 40 You are that same Person, O Supreme Being.

39. This mind of mine does not take delight in narrations about You,

O Lord of Vaikuṇṭha; it is sinful, contaminated, inauspicious,

impetuous, and overset by lust. Moreover, it is a icted by

happiness, distress, fear, and desire. With such a mind, how is a wretch like me to contemplate Your nature?

40. My tongue, which is never satiated, drags me in one direction, O

infallible Acyuta [Viṣṇu], and my genitals in another. My esh,

stomach, and ears pull me somewhere else, my sense of smell,

somewhere else again, and my restless eyes to yet another place, and so it is with the many powers of my various organs. These are

all like many co-wives who demolish the husband [with their

various demands].

41. Just see the people of this world: because of their karma, they have fallen in the Vaitaraṇī river of saṁsāra,41 and are terri ed by repeated birth, death, and anxiety over sustenance. They exhibit friendship to bodies related to their own, and enmity to others. You are on the other side [of the river of saṁsāra]. Please deliver them today from their foolishness.

42. O Bhagavān, Guru of everyone, what e ort is it for you in such deliverance? After all, You are the cause of creation, maintenance,

and destruction of this universe! Indeed, compassion by the great for

the foolish [is tting], and You are the friend of the lowly. But for

us who are the servants of Your beloved devotees, such deliverance

is unnecessary [we are already fully satis ed in service].

43. In fact, I am not even disturbed by the Vaitaraṇī river of saṁsāra, because my mind is absorbed in the wonderful nectar gained from chanting about Your prowess, O Supreme Being!

[Deliverance] is for the ignorant whose minds are averse to this, and

who are bearing the burden of [chasing after] the happiness of māyā.

44. Often, O God, sages, desirous of their own liberation, cultivate

silence in a solitary place; they are not concerned with the welfare

of others. But I have no desire for liberation for myself alone, abandoning these unfortunate souls. Other than You, I see no other

refuge for one wandering [in saṁsāra].

45. The happiness of sex and other such pleasures of those attached

to the household is meager; it bears frustration upon frustration, like

the scratching of an itch with one's hands. Lusty people are never satis ed in this world, but simply experience repeated un llment. A

wise person tolerates [the arising of desires], which are simply products of the mind, just like one tolerates an itch.

46. O Supreme Person, the means of liberation—silence, vows, study

of sacred texts, austerity, meditation, performing one's duty,

teaching the scriptures, solitude, japa (mantra repetition), and full concentration of the mind—these often become mere means of

making a living for those whose senses are not controlled. And those

who are haughty cannot even succeed in doing this.

47. The two forms of cause and e ect (sat-asat) proclaimed in the Vedas, which are like seed and sprout, are nothing other than You.

Those whose minds are xed, can, through the practice of yoga, perceive You directly here in this world in both these forms, just like re can be perceived in wood. There is no other way to do so,

as You have no material form.

48. You are the elements of air, re, earth, ether, and water. You are

the life airs (prāṇa); the senses, the heart, the mind, and the ego.

Everything, whether with qualities or without qualities, is You

alone, O Lord. There is nothing other than You that can be

expressed by thought or word.

49. Neither these guṇas, nor the deities presiding over the guṇas, nor anything composed of the guṇas such as mahat (intelligence) and all the other evolutes beginning with the mind,42 along with gods and humans who have beginnings and ends, know You. Those with pure intelligence re ect on this, and desist from studying the Vedas, O

Viṣṇu.

50. You are the goal of the highest order of ascetics (paramahaṁsa), O most worthy One. Therefore, how can people attain devotion to

You without worshipping You through the six processes: performing

worship (pūjā) through rites, composing verses, honoring with

respect, o ering one's actions, remembering Your lotus feet, and hearing Your narrations?'"

51. Śrī Nārada said: "Although He is beyond all qualities, when His qualities had been extolled with devotion in this way by His devotee

Prahlāda, the Lord became pleased and His anger restrained. He

replied to Prahlāda.

52. Śrī Bhagavān said: 'My dear Prahlāda, may all auspiciousness be upon you. I am pleased with you, O best of the demons. I ful ll all

desires of men: choose any boon you wish.

53. O long-lived one, a vision of Me is very di cult to attain for one

who has not pleased Me. But having seen Me, a living being never

experiences personal hardships anymore.

54. I am the Lord of all blessings. Saintly people with sober minds

who seek to ful ll the highest satisfaction, therefore try to please Me

with all their hearts.’”

55. Śrī Nārada said: “Although he was enticed in this way by the highest allurements in the world, because of his exclusive devotion

to Bhagavān, that best of the demons Prahlāda did not want anything.”

Book VIII

The Tale of the Elephant Bhakta: Surrender to Viṣṇu

Yoga Blueprint *If the Bhāgavata has time and again stressed that age, gender, social status, and birth are all irrelevant to eligibility for performing bhakti , this story goes even further by stretching the accessibility of approaching Īśvara to even the animal kingdom. Other than this, the main theological message of this narrative, typical of all theistic traditions, is that when one nds oneself trapped in a situation from which one cannot extricate oneself by any means or resources at one’s disposal, one can always turn to God.*

Book VIII, Chapter 2

1. Śrī Śuka said: “There was an enormous mountain known as Trikūṭa (three-peaked), O king, surrounded by the milk-ocean. It was very beautiful, and ten thousand yojanas in height.

2. It extended the same amount in width in all directions right up to

the ocean of milk, and illuminated the sky and all directions with its

three peaks made of gold, silver, and iron.

3. And it illuminated all the regions of the celestial realms with other peaks made of assorted gems and minerals. These were

covered by an assortment of trees, creepers, and bushes, and

resounded with the sounds of water from mountain cascades.

4. Since its feet were washed on all sides by the waves of milk, Trikūṭa made the earth dark colored on account of its stones of green emeralds.

5. Its valleys were enjoyed by the sporting of celestial beings: siddhas, cāraṇas, gandharvas, vidādharas, great serpents, kinnaras,

and apsaras.

6. The caves there resounded with [their] music, and proud lions roared furiously, suspecting [the noise to be from] other lions.

7. It was adorned with valleys thronging with swarms of various wild animals. The sweet sounds of birds lled its manifold trees and

celestial gardens.

8. It contained streams and lakes with crystal clear water, which had beaches with gems for sand. The breeze from the water was fragrant with the scent of the consorts of the celestials bathing there.

9. In one of its valleys is a park called Ṛtumat belonging to the noble great-souled Varuṇa. This is a leisure ground for the consorts

of the celestials (suras).

10.–14. It was beauti ed and covered everywhere with celestial

trees whose fruits and owers were always blooming. These

included mandāra, pārijāta, pāṭala, āśoka, campaka, cūta mango , piyāla, panasa, āmra mango, plums, kramuka, coconut, date, bījapūraka, madhuka, śālatāla, tamāla, asana, arjuna, ariṣṭa, uḍumbara, plakṣa,

banyan, kiṁśuka, sandalwood, neem, kovidāra, sarala, suradāru, grapes, sugarcane, plantain, jambu, badarī, akṣa, abhaya, āmala, bilva, kapittha, jambīra, and bhallātaka. And on that mountain, there was a vast lake, gleaming with golden lotuses.

15. It looked spectacular with its blooming lotuses—such as the red

kumuda, white kahlāra, and day-blooming śatapatra types—and reverberated with the humming of bees and warbling of śakunta birds.

16.–19. Its waters were lled with the pollen of lotuses swayed by

the swimming of tortoises and sh. It was lled with swans and

kāraṇḍa birds, as well as with cakra birds and cranes. The cooings of ocks of waterfowl, and koyaṣṭi and dātyūha birds resounded there.

It was surrounded by kadamba owers, and such plants as vetasa, nalanīpa, vañjulaka, kunda, kurubaka, aśoka, śirīṣa, kūṭajeṅguda,

kubjaka, svarṇayūthi, nāga, punnāga, jāti, mallikā, śatapatra, mādhavī, jālaka. It was beauti ed by these and other all-season trees and plants growing on its banks.

20. One day, the leader of a herd of elephants who dwelled in the

forests of that mountain was roaming about in a thorny place full of

large thickets of kīcaka and veṇu bamboos and reeds, trampling down the trees there.

21. Even from just the scent of that beast, other elephants; lions; tigers and other wildcats; rhinoceroses and vicious horned animals;

and huge snakes ed away in terror, as did black-and-white sarabhas

and yaks.

22. [On the other hand,] wolves, boar, bu alo, bear, porcupine, jackals, gopuccha monkeys, markaṭa monkeys, and other weaker animals—deer, rabbits, etc.—were able to roam about without fear

by the grace of the elephant.

23.–24. Making the mountain tremble on all sides by his weight, the

elephant was surrounded by male and female elephants and

followed by young elephant cubs. A icted by the heat, he was

emitting rut, and so he was followed by swarms of bees who were

consuming the rut. Smelling the breeze from the lake, fragrant with

the scent of lotus pollen, and surrounded by his herd, which was a icted by thirst, he quickly arrived near that lake, his eyes wavering from the intoxication of honey.

25. After plunging in, the elephant drank to his satisfaction the clear, nectarlike water of the lake, fragrant with the pollen of cool

blooming lotuses. Refreshed, he bathed himself with water drawn

up by his own trunk.

26. Being good-natured, the elephant was encouraging the female

elephants and elephant cubs to drink and showering them with

water spray drawn up with his trunk—just like a householder. The

arrogant wretched creature could not perceive the calamity [that was approaching] by the māyā of the Unborn Lord.

27. Then, directed there by Fate, O king, a powerful alligator angrily seized his leg. The mighty elephant, fallen into this calamity by chance, tried to free himself with all his strength.

28. The female elephants, their minds perplexed [by seeing] the leader of the herd fallen into that predicament and being dragged

about by that powerful force, trumpeted in alarm. The other bull elephants, grasping him from behind, were not able to free him.

29. While the elephant and the alligator were ghting in this way,

dragging each other in, then out [of the water], a thousand years passed by, O Lord of the earth. The immortal celestials thought it

incredible that they both still remained alive.

30. Eventually, the vigour, strength, and mental state of the

elephant leader became greatly depleted after that long period of time, and he became exhausted from being dragged into the water.

The opposite was the case for the aquatic beast [who was in his natural element]: he became invigorated.

31. In this way, the elephant found himself helpless and in danger of

his life due to the workings of Fate. Not able to rescue himself after

so much time, he re ected, and came to this understanding: 32.

‘These bull elephants of the herd were not able to free me from this

calamity—not to mention the female elephants. Although I am

caught by the bonds of Providence in the form of this alligator, I will approach someone who is Supreme, and the ultimate resort of

all.

33. That Being is the Supreme Lord. From the fear of Him Death himself ees. He gives protection to anyone surrendered to Him

who is greatly fearful of the powerful serpent of Death, who is in

pursuit with ferocious intensity. I seek shelter from Him.’”

Book VIII, Chapter 3

1. Śrī Śuka said: “After resolving in this way, the elephant xed his mind in his heart and recited the supreme mantra (japa), which he

remembered from his previous life.

2. Śri Gajendra (the elephant leader) said: ‘ Oṁ namo bhāgavate; I o er homage to Bhagavān. I meditate on Him who bestows

consciousness into this world. He is the Ultimate Person, the

primordial seed, and the Supreme Lord.

3. I surrender to that self-manifest One! From Him this world

manifests, and by Him [it is maintained]. He is Himself this

universe, but yet He is transcendent to it, and also to that which is

beyond it.

4. This universe, which is sometimes manifest and sometimes

unmanifest [at the times of its creation and eventual dissolution], exists in Him, created by His māyā potency. He is beyond sense perception, and the witness of both cause and e ect. May that

Person, who is the root of the ātman and the Ultimate transcendent Being, protect me.

5. In the due course of time, when the universes along with their celestial guardians, as well as all causes and e ects, have completely

dissolved into the ve gross elements,1 then deep dense tamas remains. He, the transcendent Lord, shines forth beyond that.

6. The gods and sages do not know His nature—so then how is a beast [like me] quali ed to attain or even speak about it? His ways

are hard to fathom. He is like a dancer, acting in di erent roles.

May He protect me.

7. Those who wish to see His most auspicious abode follow extreme

vows in the forest without deviation—such as sages and eminent

sādhus who are free from all attachments and see the ātman within all beings. He is the best friend and He is my goal.

8. Birth and karma do not exist in Him, nor, certainly, the faults of the guṇas, nor name and form (nāma-rūpa). 2 Nonetheless, when the time is appropriate, He engages these by His own māyā for the manifestation and dissolution of the worlds.

9. He has no form, and yet He has many forms. His deeds are amazing. Reverence to Him, the Supreme Lord, Brahman, who has

unlimited powers (śakti).

10. Reverence to Him who is the Witness, the illuminator of the ātman, and the Supreme Ātman. Reverence to Him who is completely beyond words, mind, and thought.

11. Reverence to Him who is attained by the wise through sattva and detachment from the fruits of action. Reverence to Him who is

the Lord of liberation, and the experience of the bliss of nirvāṇa.

12. Reverence to Him who is peaceful, erce, and dull (i.e., sattva, rajas, and tamas) and the support of the guṇas. Reverence to Him who is beyond all material characteristics, who is equal to all, and

who is full of knowledge.

13. Reverence to You[3] who are the knower of prakṛti, [4] the Controller of everything, and the Witness. Reverence to You the Supreme

Person, the source of the ātman and of prakṛti.

14. Reverence to You, the Seer of the objects of all the senses, and

the cause of all endeavor. You are the Truth that manifests as a re [ection in the non-Truth.5]

15. Reverence, reverence to You who are the cause of everything,

who are Yourself without cause, and who are the cause of wondrous

things. You are the ocean of all the Vedas and sacred texts (āgama).

Reverence to You who are liberation (apavarga), and the shelter of the saints.

16. I o er homage to You, who are the re lying concealed in the

kindling wood of the guṇas, and who manifest Your will through their agitation. You reveal Yourself to those who have renounced the ritualistic parts of the Vedas[6] by freeing their minds from attachment to the fruits of work.

17. I am devoted to You. I o er homage to You who are Yourself

free, and who can easily free a beast like me from bondage, as You

are very compassionate. I o er homage to You, Bhagavān. You are

Brahman. You are known as the inner Seer of the mind of all

[embodied beings by means of one of Your partial manifestations.7]

18. You are impossible to attain for those who are attached to their

bodies, o spring, relatives, homestead, wealth, and friends; but, for

the liberated souls, You are the object of their heart's

contemplation. Your nature is pure knowledge, devoid of any

in uence of the guṇas. I o er reverence to You, Īśvara, Bhagavān.

19. Those who desire righteousness, economic well-being, sensual

enjoyment, and liberation (dharma, kāma, artha, mukti)[8] attain their desired goal. In fact, He bestows other benedictions—even an

eternal body [in Vaikuṇṭha].[9] May that muni cent Being grant me release.

20. The devotees of Bhagavān do not desire any material goal, but are dedicated exclusively to Him. Immersed in an ocean of bliss, they sing about His amazing, auspicious activities.

21. I worship that Supreme imperishable Brahman, the Ultimate Lord. He is unmanifest, transcendent, beyond the senses, subtle, unlimited, primeval, and absolutely complete. He is very hard to attain, but approachable through yoga.

22. The celestial beings headed by Brahmā, the worlds, and all moving and non-moving things distinguished by name and form

(nāma-rūpa), are created by one of His insigni cant partial expansions.[10]

23. Just like the ames of re are sunbeams of Savitṛ the sun god,

and they emanate and pervade forth from his e ulgence, so in the

same way, the ow of the guṇas— intelligence, mind, karma, the senses, and the multitude of bodies—emanates from Him.

24. Glories to Him. He is not a god, demon (asura), mortal, or animal. He is not female, neuter, male, or beast. He is not guṇa, karma, cause, or e ect

—He is what remains when these are negated, and yet He is the totality of everything.

25. I do not wish to live [if freed from the clutches of this alligator], as what is the use of this birth as an elephant, with its internal and

external coverings [of the gross and subtle bodies]? I desire

liberation from the layers that cover the presence of the ātman.

These are not destroyed even after much time [without Your grace].

26. I bow to Him who is the Supreme destination, Brahman. He is

the unborn Creator of the Universe. He both is the universe and simultaneously transcends the universe. He knows the entire

universe and He is the Soul of the Universe.

27. The yogīs, whose activities have all been dedicated to yoga practice, perceive the Lord of yoga in their hearts. The heart can manifest Him [after being puri ed] by yoga. To Him, I bow.

28. Reverence, reverence to You, whose three powers (śaktis— the guṇas) are irresistibly potent. You are the intelligences of all beings, which are distinguished in accordance to their guṇas.11 You are the Protector of those dedicated to You. Your powers are insurmountable, and the path to You is inaccessible to those whose

senses are uncontrolled.

29. This person, overcome by Īśvara's powers (śakti) in the form of the ego, does not know his own ātman. I take refuge in Bhagavān, whose majesty is overwhelming.'"

30. Śrī Śuka said: "Gajendra's description [of the Supreme Being]

remained unspeci ed, 12 but after he had nished, Brahmā and the other gods did not approach him. They were subject to their own egos, which

were distinct one from the other according to their di erent personal characteristics. So Hari, who is the sum of all the immortals and the celestial gods, appeared there. He is the Soul of

everything.

31. After hearing Gajendra's prayers and understanding the nature of his plight, the mind of the Lord of the Universe was satis ed. Transported by his eagle carrier, Garuḍa, who is the embodiment of the Vedic hymns, He speedily approached the place where Gajendra was, bearing his cakra weapon. He was accompanied by the celestials.

32. Gajendra had been seized with great force inside the water, and was in severe distress. When he saw Hari upon Garuḍa in the sky bearing the cakra, he raised up his trunk holding a lotus ower. With great di culty, he spoke these words: 'Reverence to you Nārāyaṇa, the Guru of everything.'

33. The Unborn Viṣṇu, upon seeing the distressed Gajendra, immediately dismounted, and out of compassion quickly dragged him along with the alligator from the water. Then Hari severed the head of the alligator with his weapon, and released Gajendra while the celestials were all looking on."

Book VIII, Chapter 4

1. Śrī Śuka said: "Then, the gods, sages, and gandharva celestials headed by Brahmā and Śiva released showers of kusuma owers while praising that deed of Hari.

2. Divine dundubhi drums resounded, and the gandharvas danced and sang. The sages, cāraṇa celestials, and perfected siddhas o ered hymns to the Supreme Being.

3. The being who had taken birth as that alligator then assumed an

incredibly marvelous form. He was Hūhū, an eminent gandharva,

who had now been released from the curse of Devala.13

4. Bowing his head, he o ered respect to the Supreme imperishable

Lord, and recited the pure narrations and praiseworthy qualities of

that Abode of Glory. Viṣṇu's praises are supreme.

5. Being blessed by the Lord, Hūhū circumambulated Him, o ered

obeisance, and then, freed from all sins, returned to his abode as the

celestials watched.

6. By being touched by Bhagavān, Gajendra was liberated from the bonds of ignorance. He attained the same form as Bhagavān— four

armed and yellow garbed. 14

7. He had previously been an eminent Pāṇḍya king from the south known as Indradyumna, dedicated to the vows of Viṣṇu worship. 15

8. [After renouncing the kingdom,] the king became self-controlled,

wore matted locks, and took up residence at an āśrama in Kulācala, where he took a vow of silence. One day, at the appropriate time for

worshipping Īśvara, Hari, he was in the middle of conducting his adoration absorbed in thoughts of Acyuta, the infallible Lord.

9. By chance, a sage of great renown arrived there surrounded by

crowds of disciples. Seeing the king seated in a secluded place in silence, without o ering tokens of welcome, the sage became angry.

10. He directed this curse against Indradyumna: 'This uncivilized person is a wicked fellow of mean intelligence, as he has

disrespected a brāhmaṇa. Let him be cast into a state of deep tamas, like that of an elephant, who has dull intelligence.'"

11. Śṛī Śuka said: "After cursing him in this way, the great sage Agastya departed along with his followers. The sage-king, for his part, regarded this as the decree of Fate.

12. He was thus degraded into the womb of an elephant, but his personal memory was not nulli ed. Because of the potency of his worship of Hari [in the previous birth], even though he was in the

state of being an elephant, he was able to recall the past. 16

13. After he had liberated the elephant herd leader, the Lord with

the lotus navel17 bestowed upon Gajendra the liberated position of being his personal attendant. Accompanied by Gajendra, He then

departed, mounted on Garuḍa. He returned to his personal abode,

while this amazing deed was glori ed by the gandharvas, siddhas, and other celestials.

14. Thus, O great king, I have described to you the glory of Kṛṣṇa in

the form of the story of the liberation of the elephant king. Those

who listen to it attain the celestial realm, renown, the eradication of

the sins of the age of Kali, and the elimination of bad dreams, O best of the Kuru dynasty.

15. The pure, twice-born brāhmaṇas, who desire their own best interests, recite this story diligently after rising early in the morning, in order to pacify bad dreams.

16. Hari comprises everyone and is omnipresent. Being pleased, He

spoke as follows to Gajendra while everyone was listening, O best of

the Kuru dynasty: […]

24. 'Those who rise at the end of the night and remember My

manifestations with concentrated and devoted minds are liberated

from all sins.'"

Book IX

The Tale of King Ambarīṣa: The Consequences of O ending

Bhaktas

Yoga Blueprint *The main theological message imparted by this narrative is the danger of o ending the bhaktas of Kṛṣṇa, even if, precisely because they are humble bhaktas , they themselves do not perceive the o ense.*

Note the various ways bhakti can be performed in verses 4.18–20: as we know, in contrast to Patañjali's system, where the activities of the mind and senses are completely curtailed, in bhakti they are completely engaged in a variety of modes in worship of Viṣṇu. Additionally, in an interesting series of comments in 4.63 ., Viṣṇu declares that He is under the control of His bhaktas . As discussed in "Rāgānugā Bhakti," love is reciprocal and God Himself becomes bound by it.

Book IX, Chapter 4

13. Śrī Śuka said: "From Nābhāga was born Ambarīṣa, a virtuous man and a great bhāgavata devotee. Even the curse of the brāhmaṇa could not touch him, despite the fact that such a curse has never been countered.

14. The king said:

‘A brāhmaṇa’s punishment is impossible to evade, O lord! I wish to hear about that wise sage-king against whom it could not prevail

after it had been uttered.’”

15. Śrī Śuka said: “Ambarīṣa was greatly privileged: he was the ruler of this earth with its seven continents. He had attained unlimited wealth and incomparable power on earth.

16. But he considered all of this—which is so di cult for men to attain—as no better than a dream. He understood the [eventual]

disappearance of opulence, and that a person enters into tamas because of it.

17. He had such utter devotion in Bhagavān Vāsudeva, and also in his bhakta devotees as well as the sādhus, that he considered this universe to be no di erent from a clod of earth.

18. He engaged his mind in [meditating on] the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa,

his words in describing the qualities of Vaikuṇṭha, his hands in such

activities as cleaning the temple of Hari, and his ears in hearing the

beautiful stories of Acyuta [Kṛṣṇa].

19. He engaged his eyes in seeing the temples and deities of

Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa], the limbs of his body in touching the bodies of

His servants, his sense of smell in the fragrance of the beautiful tulasī plant [o ered to] the Lord’s lotus feet, and his sense of taste in

[the food] o ered to Him.

20. He used his feet in frequenting the places touched by the feet of

Hari, and his head in o ering obeisance to the feet of Hṛṣīkeśa

[Kṛṣṇa]. He channeled his desire in service rather than in the ful llment of sensual desires. He did this to develop a ection for those who have taken shelter of Viṣṇu, whose glories are supreme.

21. In this manner, he ruled over this earth, guided by brāhmaṇas

who were devoted to God. With all his mind, he always dedicated

all of his actions to Bhagavān, Adhokṣaja, the Supreme enjoyer of sacri ces.

22. He worshipped Īśvara, the enjoyer of sacri ce, with aśvamedha (horse) sacri ces, 1 conducted with massive pomp and appropriate remunerations for the priests. They were performed by sages such as

Vasiṣṭha, Asita, and Gautama in the desert facing the ow of the Sarasvatī river.

23. In his sacri ces, the o ciating priests, participants, and people

were gorgeously attired and appeared as beautiful as the celestials—

indeed, they did not blink!2

24. His citizens did not seek the celestial realm, which is dear to the

immortals. 3 They were content hearing and reciting the activities of Viṣṇu, whose glories are supreme.

25. Perceiving Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa] within their hearts and absorbed in

the e ulgence of their inner selves, they did not hanker after desires

which are so di cult to ful ll even for siddha, perfected beings.

26. In this manner, pleasing Hari by means of bhakti yoga combined with austerity (tapas) and the performance of his dharma, the king gradually gave up all desires.

27. He developed the insight of perceiving the illusory nature of his

palaces, wives, sons, relatives, exceptional elephants, chariots, and

steeds, and of his priceless gems, ornaments, and garments, etc., as

well as of his unlimited treasury.

28. Pleased by his mood of exclusive bhakti, Hari graced him with His cakra disc weapon, which protects the devotees and strikes fear in the opposing army.

29. Desiring to worship Kṛṣṇa, the hero undertook the dvādaśī

fasting vow4 for a year. He was accompanied in this by his queen, whose character was equal to his.

30. At the conclusion of the vow, in the month of Kārtika, the king fasted for three nights. Then he bathed and worshipped Hari in Madhuvan forest on the banks of the Kālindī river for one day.

31.–32. He ritually bathed the deity of Keśava [Kṛṣṇa] with the great abhiṣeka ceremony, 5 performed with all the requisite utensils according to the customary rites, and with clothing, ornaments,

perfumes, garlands, and other choice items. With his mind xed on

Kṛṣṇa internally, he then worshipped Him externally with great

devotion. He also worshipped the meritorious brāhmaṇas, who were fully accomplished (siddhas).

33.–34. He bestowed vast numbers6 of cows in charity to the sādhus and brāhmaṇas. They had golden horns, silver hooves, and nice cloth. They were milk-bearing, with calves in tow, young, beautiful,

and furnished with the requisite paraphernalia. He then fed the sādhus and brāhmaṇas choice foodstu s.

35. Once everyone's appetite had been satis ed, the king was

preparing with their permission to break fast himself. But then the

great sage Durvāsā himself happened there as an unexpected guest.

36. The king honored this guest by standing up and o ering him a

seat and other items. Then he approached his feet and requested him to take food.

37. Gladly accepting that invitation, the sage rst went to perform

his prescribed duties. He immersed himself in the auspicious waters

of the Kālindī river, meditating on Brahman.

38. Since only half an hour remained in which to terminate the dvādaśī fast [or its bene ts would be wasted], the king, who knew the codes of dharma [that one should not eat before feeding one's guests], consulted with the twice-born brāhmaṇas: 39. 'There is fault in o ending a brāhmaṇa, but also fault in not terminating the dvādaśī fast at the correct time. Which course of action should I follow, such that I will not be tainted by the sin of adharma, but rather gain merit?

40. The brāhmaṇas have stated that the drinking of water constitutes both having eaten as well as having not eaten; therefore I will take

only water to break my fast.'

41. Thus, the sage-king consumed water, thinking of Acyuta [Kṛṣṇa]

in his mind. He then awaited the return of the brāhmaṇa, O best of the Kurus!

42. Eventually Durvāsā, who had completed his ritual duties,

returned from the banks of the Yamunā. He understood, through his

power of intuition, the act of the king, who was welcoming him.

43. His face twisted with arched eyebrows, his limbs shaking with

anger, and consumed by extreme hunger as well, Durvāsā spoke to

the king, whose hands were joined in respect: 44. ‘ Aho! Just see the transgression of dharma by this wicked man who has become intoxicated with his opulence. He is not a bhakta of Viṣṇu—he thinks that he himself is lord!

45. I came as an unexpected guest, and after welcoming me with the

appropriate hospitality, he then ate food without o ering me any. I

will immediately demonstrate the consequences of this to him.’

46. In amed with anger, Durvāsā then pulled out a lock of his matted hair and created from it a female demon, who was like the

blazing re at the end of Time, 7 [to kill] the king.

47. Seeing her rushing toward him blazing with sword in hand, and

making the earth tremble with her steps, the king did not move from his spot.

48. But the cakra disc, which had been entrusted earlier by the Supreme Being with the protection of His servant, incinerated that

demon, like a re burns up an angry serpent.

49. Seeing his e ort had been fruitless and that the discus was now

hurtling toward him, the terri ed Durvāsā ran in all directions, desperate to save his life.

50. The discus pursued him, just as ames whipped up by a forest

re pursue a snake. Seeing it so close on his heels, the sage, desperate to distance himself from it, ed to a cave on Mount Meru.

51. He went in every direction—the sky, the earth, and the space between; the oceans, the celestial spheres along with their celestial

guardians; and the three realms—the heavens, earth, and

subterranean regions. But wherever he ed, he saw the cakra. It was impossible to tolerate, or even to look upon [because of its glare].

52. Seeking refuge but unable to nd any protector anywhere at all,

Durvāsā approached Lord Brahmā, his mind petri ed. He said: 'O

self-born creator! Please protect me from the e ulgence of Viṣṇu, the Unconquerable.'

53. Śrī Brahmā said: 'Viṣṇu is the soul of Time. At the end of his pastimes—a period known as dviparārdha[8]—when He desires to burn up the universe, it will be dissolved along with my own abode

by the simple knitting of His eyebrows.

54. I myself, Śiva, and prominent beings such as Dakṣa and Bhṛgu,

as well as the primary lords of progeny, the lords of beings, and the

lords of the asura demons, all of us are surrendered to Viṣṇu's law.

We carry it placed upon our heads for the well-being of the world.'

55. Turned down by Brahmā, Durvāsā, still scorched by Viṣṇu's disc,

sought shelter from Śiva, who resided on Mount Kailāsa.

56. Śrī Śaṅkara [Śiva] said: ‘We also cannot prevail over the Supreme Being, my dear son! He is the Supreme. In Him, these

universes lled with embodied souls, which are like the bodily

coverings of Brahmā, and thousands of others too similar to this one, become manifest and then, in Time, return to unmanifestation.

We are just wandering about within them.

57.–58. I, Sanat-Kumāra, Nārada, Lord Brahmā, Kapila,

Apāntaratama, Devala, Dharma, Āsuri, and other perfected siddhas

headed by Marīci, none of us understand His māyā since all of us are covered by it.

59. This weapon of the Īśvara of Īśvaras is insurmountable, even for us. So go to Him for refuge. Hari will grant you safety.’

60. Disappointed, Durvāsā then went to the abode of Bhagavān, known as Vaikuṇṭha, which is presided over by Śrīnivāsa [Viṣṇu]

along with Śrī (Lakṣmī).

61. Scorched by the ames of the invincible weapon, he fell at the

feet of Viṣṇu trembling and said: ‘O Acyuta, Ananta, Master, beloved

by the righteous. I have performed a sin: please protect me, O Lord

of the Universe.

62. Because I was not aware of Your supreme power, I committed an o ense against someone dear to You. Please nullify this o ense,

O Controller. Upon reciting Your name, even a person in hell is released!’

63. Śrī Bhagavān said: 'O brāhmaṇa! I am under the control of my bhaktas — it is as if I have no independence. My heart has been captured by the saints (sādhus) and bhaktas, and I, in turn, am dear to the bhakta community.

64. Without My bhaktas and the sādhus, I do not desire even My own self, O brāhmaṇa, nor Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune, who is very intimate to Me. I am the supreme goal for them.

65. They have renounced spouse, home, sons, great wealth, and

even their own life and approached Me for shelter. How am I

capable of rejecting them?

66. The sādhus see all beings with equal vision and have their hearts bound to Me. They control Me with their devotion, just as a chaste

wife controls a true husband.

67. Satis ed by My service, they do not even desire the four types of

liberation,9 which are all available through service, to say nothing of any other temporal thing.

68. The sādhus are My heart, and I am the heart of the sādhus. They do not know anything other than Me, and I can barely think of anything other than them.

69. Now I will tell you the remedy for your predicament, O

brāhmaṇa: pay heed to it.

Go to that person against whom you unleashed this curse, sir. Force

directed against the sādhus results in harm against the one who is the instigator.

70. Austerity (tapas) and knowledge both bring bene t to the brāhmaṇas. But they bring the opposite results to the agent who is of bad character.

71. O brāhmaṇa! You should go to King Ambarīṣa, son of Nābha, and seek the pardon from that great devotee; then you will nd peace, O son.’”

Book IX, Chapter 5

1. “When he was advised in this way by Bhagavān, Durvāsā, still a icted by the disc weapon, approached Ambarīṣa and clasped his

feet in misery.

2. Seeing Durvāsā struggling, Ambarīṣa was ashamed at the

touching of his feet. Feeling greatly aggrieved, he prayed to Hari’s

weapon with compassion.

3. Ambarīṣa said: ‘You are the re, the master, the moon, and the

lord of all luminaries. You are water, you are earth, ether, and air,

and the qualities perceived by the senses.

4. Obeisance to you, Sudarśana of a thousand spokes! You are dear

to Viṣṇu. Let there be well-being for the brāhmaṇa, O lord of the earth.

5. You are dharma, you are ṛta (cosmic harmony), you are truth, you are the sacri ce (yajña) as well as the consumer of the sacri ce. You are the protector of the worlds and the soul of everything. You are

the energy of the Supreme Being.

6. Obeisance to you! Your e ulgence is pure, you have a beautiful

hub, and you are the upholder of dharma. You are the protector of the three worlds, but a blazing comet for the asuras (demons) and those who do not

follow dharma. I o er homage to you, who perform amazing deeds at the speed of mind.

7. Tamas has been dispelled by your potency, which is composed of dharma, and sattva has been upheld for the mahātmās. You are unfathomable. You are the master of speech. This universe, with its

causes and e ects and higher and lower forms, is your form.

8. O unconquerable one! When you are discharged by Viṣṇu, you

penetrate the army of the demons and sever their arms, bowels, feet,

and necks incessantly. Your potency is supreme.

9. You have been appointed by Viṣṇu, the wielder of the club, who

is all-tolerant, to destroy the miscreants and to protect the universe.

Bestow your grace on this twice-born brāhmaṇa for the sake of our family tradition. This will be a favor upon us.

10. If we have ever properly performed a sacri ce, given charity, or

conducted our dharma, and if our lineage is one that considers brāhmaṇas to be gods, then let this twice-born one be freed from distress.

11. If Bhagavān, the sole source of all qualities, is pleased with us, due to our attitude of seeing the ātman in all beings, let this twice-born one be free of distress.’”

12. Śrī Śuka said: “When it was entreated in this way by the king, Sudarśana, Viṣṇu’s disc weapon, which had been scorching the

twice-born brāhmaṇa, became completely paci ed by the king’s supplication.

13. Upon being freed from the heat of the re weapon, Durvāsā

regained his composure. He then praised the king, bestowing the highest blessings upon him.

14. Durvāsā said: ‘ Aho! Today I have witnessed the greatness of the servants of Viṣṇu! Although an o ense was committed to you, O

king, you nonetheless endeavored for our welfare.

15. What is impossible for the sādhus to accomplish? What is impossible for the mahātmās (great souls) to renounce? Bhagavān, Hari, the Lord of the Sātvata lineage, has been won over by them.

16. What needs do they have, the servants of Viṣṇu, whose feet are

places of pilgrimage? Merely by hearing His name, a person

becomes puri ed.

17. I am most fortunate, O king—you are an extremely

compassionate soul. You overlooked the o ense committed by me,

and saved my life.’

18. The king, who had himself not taken any food because of awaiting Durvāsā’s return, clasped the sage’s feet, satis ed him, and

fed him.

19. After he had eaten the food that had been brought with great

care and hospitality, and which had satis ed all his needs, the sage

was fully satis ed. He then said to the king very respectfully: ‘Now

you please eat.

20. I am very pleased. I have been favored by seeing, touching, and

conversing with you, a bhāgavata, and by receiving hospitality and spiritual wisdom.

21. The celestial ladies will constantly sing about this pure deed of

yours, and the entire world will praise your supremely auspicious glories.’”

22. Śrī Śuka said: “Durvāsā praised the king in this manner and then, fully satis ed, bade Ambarīṣa farewell. He then departed

through his mystic power via the sky to the abode of Brahmā.

23. A whole year had elapsed since the sage had gone o [to take

his bath] without returning, yet during this time the king had remained without eating, desiring to see him.

24. After Durvāsā had departed, Ambarīṣa ate the pure remnants of

the brāhmaṇa’s food. 10 Thinking over the sage’s plight and subsequent release, he determined that his own power was but the

potency of the Supreme.

25. In this manner, the king, who had so many good qualities, performed bhakti to Vāsudeva, who is Brahman, the Supreme Ātman through all of his activities. As a result, all destinations in saṁsāra

[devoid of bhakti], even up to the highest abode of Brahmā, appeared like hell to him.

26. Eventually, Ambarīṣa xed his mind and handed over the

kingdom to his sons, who all had his same qualities, and entered the

forest. There he absorbed his mind in Vāsudeva, the Supreme

Ātman, and the ow of the guṇas ceased for him.

27. By glorifying and contemplating this pure narrative about the emperor Ambarīṣa, O king, one becomes a bhakta of Bhagavān."

The Tale of Saubhari: Suppressed Saṁskāras

Yoga Blueprint *The short Tale of Saubhari illustrates that even though one may renounce the world radically— Saubhari went so far as to meditate underwater in his attempt to completely distance himself from sense objects — saṁskāras of desire never fully disappear but remain latent.*

They can be triggered at any moment—in his case, simply by witnessing two sh mating. This narrative feeds into the Bhāgavata's overall insistence that only through bhakti can the desires themselves be burned. Other processes can remove the karmic consequences of past actions, and suppress the desires that cause them, but not eliminate them. The story also strongly underscores the perception that desires, even if ful lled in abundance, can never ful ll.

Book IX, Chapter 6

39.–40. Śrī Śuka said: "Saubhari was submerged in the waters of the Yamunā, disciplining himself with severe austerities. There, under the water, desire was kindled in him after he saw the king of shes

happily engaging in sex. As a result, the brāhmaṇa [gave up his practices] and then requested the king for one of his maiden

daughters. The king replied: 'You may take a maiden, O brāhmaṇa, at her choice in a svayaṁvara ceremony, [where the maiden chooses her own husband].'

41. Saubhari thought to himself: 'I am gray and wrinkled, and my

head shakes. I am in fact being spurned [by the king] as I am old

and unattractive to women and so will not be chosen.'

42. So the [yoga] master resolved: 'I shall perfect my body such that it becomes desirable even to celestial women, not to mention mortal

princesses.’

43. After doing this, the sage was then admitted by the guard into the opulent inner quarter of the palace reserved for maidens. There, although he was a sole suitor, Saubhari was selected as husband by all fty princesses!

44. Because their minds had all become drawn to him, great dissent broke out between the maidens, and their a ection [for each other] was broken: ‘This man is t for me, not you,’ they all said.

45.–46. Saubhari was well versed in the Ṛg-Veda [and thus skilled in mantra incantations]. He enjoyed with those princesses without interruption in palaces furnished with the most exquisite and priceless opulence [created by] his austerities.11 They were lled with costly garlands, foodstu s, ointments, bathing places, ornaments, garments, sitting places, and beds, and they were attended by beautifully adorned male and female attendants. They had fragrant groves, streams with crystal waters, and a variety of garden parks with birds, bees, and bards celebrating in sound.

47. The ruler of the seven continents, Māndhatā, was so astounded at seeing Saubhari situated in his householder life that he gave up the pride that accompanied his own universal opulence.

48. But, absorbed in sense grati cation in his palaces and stimulated by varieties of pleasures, Saubhari was still not satis ed, just as re

is not extinguished by drops of ghee. 12

49. One day, that great master of the Ṛg-Veda, while sitting down, realized his compromised condition, caused by his own self, which

had all come about because of the mating of sh.

50. ‘ Aho! Just look at my downfall, me, an ascetic performer of austerities, who had taken a vow of acting in Truth! [My absorption

on] brāhman, cultivated for such a long time, was derailed because of the mating of sh underwater!

51. One desirous of liberation must renounce all association with those who are dedicated to sex. With all one’s heart and soul, one

must not let the senses ow outwardly. Living alone in a secluded

place—or perhaps in the company of sādhus who have taken the same vows —one should engage one’s mind on the unlimited Lord.

52. I was a lone ascetic performing tapas underwater, but because of associating with sh, I have become fty [as it were]—without even

mentioning my ve hundred o spring! I can nd no satisfaction for

my desires for this world or the next—they demand never-ending

indulgence. My mind has been overwhelmed by the guṇas of māyā, and my consciousness has sense objects as its goal.’

53. Living in this way in his household for some time, Saubhari eventually became averse to it. Once he had become xed in

renunciation, he eventually went to the forest. His wives followed

him, considering their husband to be their lord.

54. There, with controlled mind, Saubhari performed intense

austerities. It is through these that the ātman is revealed. Then, along with the sacred res, he joined his ātman with the Supreme Ātman.

55. The wives, seeing that their husband had attained the supreme

destination, followed him by dint of his potency, just as ames

[become extinguished], when a re has become extinguished, O

great king."

PART III

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Incarnation

Book X1

Kṛṣṇa's Birth

Bhāva Blueprint *Since Kṛṣṇa's birth parents are aware of His divinity in this passage, we nd a rather formal bhāva in this section, in contrast with the intimacy we will encounter in the next sections. Indeed, both Vasudeva and Devakī eulogize Kṛṣṇa in the standardized and technical rhetoric of the Vedānta and Sāṅkhya philosophical traditions. Nonetheless, we see his parents are fearful that Kaṁsa will harm Kṛṣṇa, and we will recall from " Rāga , Bhāva , and Rasa " that one of the characteristics of vātsalya rasa is the conviction that Kṛṣṇa is dependent on the protection of the bhakta .*

Of interest here are the incredible past-life austerities performed by Vasudeva and Devakī to attain Kṛṣṇa as their son. We note that Kṛṣṇa rst appears in His Viṣṇu form, then transforms into the two-armed Kṛṣṇa form. Additionally, III.21 points to the "o cial" reason for Kṛṣṇa's incarnation.

[Preamble: Kaṁsa, the brother of Kṛṣṇa's birth mother, Devakī, has been informed by a celestial voice that the eighth child of his sister will be the cause of his death. So he imprisons her in his capital city of Mathura along with her husband, Vasudeva, and slaughters their rst six children.

The seventh appears to be a miscarriage, but in actual fact he is Balarāma, who is transferred by yogamāyā into the womb of Rohiṇī, Vasudeva's co-wife, who is residing in the forests of nearby Vraj under the protection of Nanda. Hence, Balarāma is Kṛṣṇa's elder brother. The scene is thus in Kaṁsa's prison house at the birth of the eighth child, Kṛṣṇa. Vasudeva transfers Kṛṣṇa to Vraj and switches Him with Yaśodā's newborn girl. Hence, it appears Devakī has given birth to a female, and Kṛṣṇa grows up with His foster parents, Nanda and Yaśodā, who are unaware that He is not their child.]

[The reader will have noted that I have up to now used capital letters for pronouns referring to Kṛṣṇa as God, following the conventions of biblical scholarship and to underscore the point that Kṛṣṇa is perceived as God in this same sense. In this part 3, in a somewhat clumsy attempt to coordinate these pronouns with the workings of yogamāyā, I use capitals only when the participants in the narrative are aware of Kṛṣṇa's majesty, but not when they are unaware of it or only partly aware of it and thus participating in one of the selected bhāvas of sakhya, vātsalya, and madhurā.]

Book X, Chapter 3

1. In due time, an extremely auspicious moment endowed with all

good qualities arrived. At the time of [Kṛṣṇa's] birth, the

constellations and the stars were all favorable. The constellation was

Rohiṇī, which is presided over by Brahmā.

2. The directions were clear and the sky covered with clusters of visible stars. On the earth there was a happy abundance of mines,

pastures, villages, and towns.

3. The rivers contained crystal-clear water and the ponds were

beautiful with lotuses. Lines of trees o ered eulogies with the loud

sounds of bees and birds.

4. A fresh breeze blew in that region, pleasing the senses and bearing pleasant scents, and the sacred res of the brāhmaṇas blazed forth, undisturbed.

5. The minds of the ascetics and the celestials were peaceful, and kettledrums resounded in unison at the moment of birth of the

unborn One.

6. The celestial kinnaras and gandharvas burst into song, the siddhas and cāraṇas o ered prayers, and the vidyādharas joyfully danced

along with the apsarās.

7. The sages and demigods, over owing with happiness, showered

owers, and the clouds rumbled gently, resonating with the ocean.

8. At midnight, when deep darkness had fallen, Janārdana [Kṛṣṇa]

was born. Viṣṇu, who dwells in the heart of everyone, appeared in

Devakī, who resembled a goddess, like the full moon appearing in

the eastern direction.

9.–10. Vasudeva[2] saw that amazing, lotus-eyed child, His four arms wielding the weapons of the conch, club, lotus, and discus. [3] He bore the mark of śrīvatsa, and the kaustubha jewel was radiant on His neck. Clad in a yellow garment, He appeared beautiful as a dark rain cloud. He was resplendent with a magni cent belt, and arm and wrist bracelets, and His profuse locks were encircled with a lustrous

helmet and earrings made of valuable vaidūrya gems.

11. Upon seeing His son, Hari, Vasudeva was overwhelmed by the

auspicious occasion of Kṛṣṇa's incarnation. His eyes were wide with

amazement. Overcome with joy, he bestowed ten thousand cows on the brāhmaṇas.

12. Vasudeva understood that this was the Supreme Being illuminating the birth chamber with His radiance, O Parīkṣit, descendant of Brahmā. Realizing His majesty, Vasudeva's fear was dispelled. He praised Kṛṣṇa with body bowed, hands joined in supplication, and concentrated mind.

13. Vasudeva said: "It is clear that You are Bhagavān, God Himself, the Supreme Being beyond the material world. You are the knower of the minds of everyone. Your form is pure bliss and majesty.4

14. It was You, in the beginning, who created this world, comprising the three guṇa qualities, out of Your own nature. Then, although not actually entering into it, You nonetheless make it seem that You have entered it.

15.–16. This is like these material elements: although full of potency, they do not produce form when existing separately. Yet, when they combine and interact together, they produce the manifold universe with all its forms. They appear to enter into this world, but actually this is not the case since they existed beforehand.

17. In the same way You exist, along with the guṇas. These can be perceived by their characteristics, which are recognizable by the intelligence. You,

however, cannot be perceived by these guṇas, due to being concealed. There is no inside and outside of You.

18. You are the universal soul of everything, and the essence of the

soul. One who considers the external manifestation of the ātman

[soul] in the form of the guṇas [the body] to have existence separate from oneself is foolish. Such an analysis is incorrect and without foundation. Consequently, such a person accepts a view that has been refuted.

19. O all-pervading Lord, they say that the origin, maintenance, and

destruction of this world is from You. Yet You do not exert e ort,

are devoid of the guṇas, and are not subject to transformation. But this is not contradictory for You—You are Brahman, the controller, and all this is performed by the guṇas under Your auspices.

20. Through Your divine potency, You, the Lord, produce from

Yourself a white color for the maintenance of the three worlds

[Viṣṇu], then a red color infused with power for creation from rajas

[Brahmā], and then a black color for the dissolution of all creatures

from tamas [Śiva].

21. O Lord of everything and omnipresent One, desiring to protect

this world You have incarnated in my house. You will destroy the

armies arrayed for battle with millions of demoniac leaders

masquerading as kings. [5]

22. But when the barbaric Kaṁsa heard that Your birth was to be in

our house, he murdered all Your brothers born before You. Hearing

the reports of Your incarnation from his servants, he is rushing here

even now, weapons in hand."

23. Śrī Śuka said: "Then, Devakī, seeing this son of hers displaying the characteristics of the Supreme Being, went toward Him in great

astonishment. She was afraid of Kaṁsa.

24. Śrī Devakī said: 'That form which they call Brahman, unmanifest, original, the light, devoid of the guṇas, unchanging, pure being, undi erentiated, and devoid of activity is You. You are Viṣṇu

Himself, the light of the self.

25. When, through the force of time, the universe is destroyed at the

end of two parārdhas, 6 when the great elements have entered into their elemental matrix, and when the manifest has withdrawn into

the unmanifest, 7 Your Lordship alone remains. You are known as all-inclusive.

26. O Supreme spirit and friend, they say that this Time factor of

Lord Viṣṇu, from the twinkling of an eye up to the period of a year,

is Your activity. As a result of it, this universe acts. I surrender to

You, who are that mighty controller, O refuge.

27. Mortal beings, fearful of the serpent of mortality, do not attain

fearlessness, despite escaping to all corners of the world. But now,

after serendipitously obtaining Your lotus feet, they can sleep

peacefully. Death escapes from them.

28. You are He, the Lord. Protect us from Kaṁsa, the fearsome son

of Ugrasena. We are terri ed. But do not reveal this form as the Supreme Being, the object of meditation, to ordinary sight.

29. Let that sinful one not know about Your birth in me, O

Madhusūdana [Kṛṣṇa]. My mind is disturbed and I am trembling

with fear of Kaṁsa on account of You.

30. O Lord of the Universe, withdraw that transcendent form. It has

four arms and is adorned with the splendor of lotus, club, disc, and

conch.

31. That Supreme Person who, at the appropriate occasion at the end of Brahmā's night,8 bears this entire universe within His own

body, is Your Lordship, the same person who has entered my womb.

How wonderful is this imitation of the human [ways] of the world.'

32. Śrī Bhagavān said: 'You, in a previous creation, during the era of Svāyambhuva Manu,9 were Pṛśni, O chaste lady, and this Vasudeva was a faultless prajāpati called Sutapā.

33. After you were both instructed by Brahmā in the creation of progeny, you restrained your senses and underwent extreme ascetic

practices.

34. You endured the various features of the seasons—heat, cold, sunshine, wind, and rain. The impurities of your minds were

removed by breath control.

35. You endeavored to worship Me, desiring benedictions from Me,

your minds appeased by a diet of wind and fallen leaves.

36. In this way, absorbed in Me and performing extreme and very

arduous disciplines, ten thousand divine years passed by for you both.

37. Then, fully satis ed with your continual austerity, faith, and devotion, I manifested in your heart in this form, O sinless one.

38. Being asked to choose a boon, you requested a son like Me. So I,

the Lord of boon givers, have become manifest out of a desire to satisfy your desire.

39. You were childless as husband and wife, and had not indulged

in sexual intercourse. Deluded by My divine māyā, you did not choose liberation.

40. After I had departed, you received the blessing of a son such as

Me. Having ful lled your heart's desire, you enjoyed the pleasures

of sexual intercourse.

41. Not nding anyone else in the world who was My equal in the

qualities of magnanimity and virtue, I became your son, known as

Pṛśnigarbha, born of Pṛśni.

42. As Upendra, I was again born from both of them—that is, you

both—of Kaśyapa in the womb of Aditi. Because I was a dwarf, I

became known as Vāmana [the dwarf].10

43. In this third appearance, I have now again taken birth from you both through that same form [of Viṣṇu]. I have stated the facts, O chaste lady.

44. This form was shown to you to remind you of My previous birth. Otherwise, because of My appearance as a mortal, knowledge of My real nature would not arise.

45. Both of you, constantly thinking a ectionately of Me in my nature as Brahman, as well as in My nature as a son, will attain My supreme destination.'

46. After speaking in this way, Lord Hari [Kṛṣṇa] fell silent and immediately changed into an ordinary child through His yogamāyā power of illusion while His parents were watching.

47. Vasudeva, the son of Śūra, removed his son from the room of the birth, as had been directed by the Lord. Then, just at the time that he wanted to leave, Yogamāyā[11] was born to the wife of Nanda [in Vraj].

48.–49. As Vasudeva approached carrying Kṛṣṇa, all the entrances, which had been securely shut with huge doors and iron bolts and chains, opened of their own accord through yogamāyā's in uence, just as darkness [disappears] before the sun. Meanwhile, all of the doorkeepers and citizens slept, their consciousness and all their functions overcome [by sleep]. The clouds, rumbling mildly,

showered rain. Śeṣa followed, warding o the water with his

hoods. 12

50. While Indra was pouring down rain incessantly, the Yamunā

river, younger sister of Yama, the Lord of death,13 foaming with the force of waves from its mass of deep water, became agitated with

hundreds of fearful whirlpools. But she gave passage, as the ocean

did to Rāma, the husband of Sītā, the Goddess of Fortune. 14

51. On reaching Nanda's Vraj, Vasudeva found all the cowherd men

there fast asleep. Putting his son down on Yaśodā's bed and picking

up her daughter, he again returned home.

52. Vasudeva then put the infant girl down on the bed of Devakī,

refastened his leg-shackles, and remained as he was before.

53. Afterward, Yaśodā, Nanda's wife, aware of the birth but

exhausted, and with her memory stolen by sleep, could not recall the gender of the child."

Vātsalya Bhāva: Kṛṣṇa as Mischievous Child

The Vision of Kṛṣṇa's Cosmic Form Bhāva Blueprint *In these beautiful passages we feature the vātsalya bhāva , where the participants assume a parental relationship with Kṛṣṇa. This bhāva is not just limited to Kṛṣṇa's actual (foster) parents, but pertains to all the elder gopas and gopīs of Vraj. The de ning feature of this bhāva is that it is God who is perceived as dependent on His bhaktas for protection and well-being! The passage begins with sage Garga implying that Kṛṣṇa is Viṣṇu and has had numerous previous incarnations. However, the main feature of this passage, in addition to giving a sense of the delightful nature of this type of parental*

relationship with Kṛṣṇa, is that it provides an excellent example of the workings of Yogamāyā . Notice how Yaśodā's intimate mothering of Kṛṣṇa is shattered when Yogamāyā lifts her spell and Yaśodā

realizes who Kṛṣṇa actually is: her vātsalya bhāva is destroyed. It is replaced by the formal Vedānta-type rhetoric uttered by Kṛṣṇa's birth parents when He was born. It is only when the spell is again recast that Yaśodā can again reenter into the intimacy of this bhāva.

[Preamble: Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are now toddlers scurrying around Vraj.]

Book X, Chapter 8

1. Śrī Śuka, said: "On being invited by Vasudeva, Garga, the purohita

[family priest] of the Yadus, went to Nanda's Vraj, O king. He was a

very austere person.

2. Seeing him, [Nanda] was overjoyed, considering him to be [equal

to the Supreme Lord] Adhokṣaja [Viṣṇu]. Nanda rose up to greet him with folded hands, and worshipped him by falling down in full

obeisance.

3. The sage was comfortably seated and given a hospitable

reception. After pleasing him with agreeable and honest words,

[Nanda] said: 'What arrangements can we make for one who is already fully complete, O brāhmaṇa?

4. The wanderings here and there of great souls, O Lord, are for the

ultimate bene t of the common people, who are householders and

poor in spirit. They never have any other purpose.

5. That knowledge of astrology, the movement of the stars, has been

composed by yourself, sir, and is beyond sense perception.15 By this knowledge, a person becomes aware of both imminent and distant

events.

6. You are certainly the most eminent of the knowers of Brahman.

You should please perform the puri catory rites of these two boys.

The brāhmaṇa is the guru of men, by birth.'

7. Śrī Garga said: 'I am well-known everywhere on the earth as the spiritual preceptor of the Yadus. If your son is consecrated by me,

He will be revealed to be the son of Devakī.

8.–9. Kaṁsa has a sinful mind. He has heard the words of Devakī's

daughter, and his suspicions are aroused. After deliberating on your

friendship with Vasudeva, and on the fact that the eighth pregnancy

of Devakī was not supposed to be a female he will kill [your son].

This might, therefore, be a bad course of action for us.'

10. Śrī Nanda said: 'Perform the puri catory rites of the twice-born and utter words of blessing in this cowpen in secret. It will not be

observed even by my own relatives.'"

11. Śrī Śuka said: "Appealed to in this way, the brāhmaṇa, unrecognized, secretly performed the name-giving ceremony of the

two boys. He had in any case wanted to perform it personally.

12. Śrī Garga said: 'This one, the son of Rohiṇī, gives pleasure

[rama] to His loved ones by His qualities, and so will be known as Rāma. Because of His excessive strength [bala], He will be known as Bala, and, because of His association with the Yadus, He will also be

named Saṅkarṣaṇa [the uniter].

13. Bodies of three di erent colors, according to the yuga—white, red, and then yellow—were accepted by this other one.16 Now He has come with a black (kṛṣṇa) complexion.

14. Previously, this son of yours was born of Vasudeva, and that is

why the learned refer to Him as beautiful Vāsudeva. 17

15. There are many names and forms of your son, according to deed

and quality. I know them, but common people do not.

16. This boy, who is the delight of Gokula and the gopas, will bring good fortune. Because of Him, you will all easily overcome every obstacle.

17. Previously, O lord of Vraj, in times of anarchy, the righteous were harassed by bandits. Protected by Him, they were strengthened

and conquered the bandits.

18. People who are very fortunate place their a ection in this boy.

Enemies cannot overpower them, just as the demons cannot

overpower those who have Viṣṇu on their side.

19. Therefore, O Nanda, this son of yours is equal to Nārāyaṇa in

qualities, splendor, fame, and authority. Protect Him with great diligence.’”

20. Śrī Śuka said: “After he had been instructed about himself in this way and Garga had gone to his own home, Nanda was lled with

joy. He considered himself full of good fortune.

21. After a short time had passed, Balarāma and Keśava [Kṛṣṇa]

roamed about Vraj, crawling around on Their hands and knees.

22. The two of Them crawled in the dust of Vraj like snakes, dragging Their legs, which [from Their anklets] gave o sweet

sounds and tinkling noises. They delighted in that sound, and so They followed people, but then scurried back to Their mothers as if

frightened and confused.

23. Their two mothers, whose breasts were seeping milk from

a ection, picked their two boys up in their arms. The boys looked

adorable with the mud smeared on Their bodies. After o ering their

breasts and gazing at Their faces and Their tiny teeth as they suckled, the mothers fell into a blissful state.

24. When the women found the boys' childhood līlā worth watching, the ladies of Vraj would leave their households and enjoy

themselves, looking and laughing as the two were dragged hither and thither by the calves whose tails They had grasped.

25. The two boys were very active and Their play [sometimes] took

Them out of bounds. When their mothers could not safeguard their

sons from horned or fanged animals, re, swords, water, winged

creatures, and thorns, nor even perform their household duties, they

became very anxious.

26. After a short time, O kingly sage, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were walking easily in Gokula and no longer had bruised knees.

27. Thereafter, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, along with Balarāma, played with the boys of Vraj of the same age, arousing rapture in the women of

Vraj.

28. Observing the delightful childish activity of Kṛṣṇa, the gopīs gathered and spoke tongue in cheek as follows [in the presence] of

His mother, who was listening: 29. 'Sometimes, he releases the

calves at the wrong time, and laughs when cries [of protest] are raised. Moreover, he eats the tasty milk and whey that he steals by

means of his thieving devices. He divides [the curds and whey] and

feeds the monkeys. If he does not eat, he breaks the pot. When there

is nothing available, and he leaves angry with the household, he blames the children.

30. When he cannot reach, he devises a system [to get things] by

arranging benches and rice-husking mortars. Knowing what has

been placed inside the pots hanging on rope slings, the cunning boy

[makes] a hole [in them] at that time of day when the gopīs are absorbed in household chores. His own body, which bears clusters

of precious jewels, functions as a light in the dark house.

31. While he is engaged in such audacities, he passes urine and other things in our houses. Although his deeds are carried out by theft, he outwardly appears virtuous.' In this way, these a airs were

related by the women as they gazed at Kṛṣṇa's beautiful face with its

fear-stricken eyes. With a smile on her face, Yaśodā did not want to

scold Kṛṣṇa.

32. Once, when Balarāma and the other cowherd boys were playing,

They complained to mother Yaśodā: ‘Kṛṣṇa has eaten mud.’

33. Yaśodā was concerned for His welfare, and scolded Kṛṣṇa, whose

eyes seemed to be full of fear. Grasping Him in her hand, she said to

Him: 34. ‘Why have you secretly eaten mud, you naughty boy?

These young friends of yours are saying so, and so is your elder brother.’

35. ‘Mother, I didn’t eat any mud. They are all spreading false accusations. if you think they are speaking the truth, then you look

into my mouth yourself.’

36. ‘If that is the case, then open wide,’ she said. Lord Hari [Kṛṣṇa],

whose supremacy cannot be constrained, but who is God assuming

the form of a human boy for play, opened wide.

37.–38. Yaśodā saw there the universe of moving and non-moving

things; space; the cardinal directions; the sphere of the earth with its oceans, islands, and mountains; air and re; and the moon and the

stars. She saw the circle of the constellations, water, light, the wind, the sky, the evolved senses, the mind, the elements, and the three

guṇa qualities. [18]

39. She saw this universe with all of its variety di erentiated into

bodies, which are the repositories of souls. She saw the time factor,

nature, and karma. Seeing Vraj as well as herself in the gaping mouth in the body of her son, she was struck with bewilderment: 40. 'Is this actually a dream? Is it a supernatural illusion, or is it just the confusion of my own intelligence? Or is it, in fact, some inherent divine power of this child of mine?

41. Therefore, I o er homage to His feet, which are the support of this world. From them, and through their agency, this world

manifests. Their true nature cannot be known by the senses nor by

reason. They are very di cult to perceive by thought, words, deeds,

or intellect.

42. He is my refuge. Through His illusory power arise ignorant notions such as: "I am me; he over there is my husband; and this is

my son; I am the virtuous wife, protectress of all the wealth of the

ruler of Vraj; and all the gopas and gopīs, along with the wealth derived from the cattle, are mine."'

43. Then the omnipotent Supreme Lord cast His yogamāyā [divine

power of illusion] in the form of maternal a ection over the gopī, who had come to understand the truth.

44. Immediately, the gopī's memory was erased. She sat her son on her lap and returned to her previous state of mind, with her heart

full of intense love.

45. She considered Hari [Kṛṣṇa], Whose glories are sung by the three Vedas, the Upaniṣads, Sāṅkhya yoga, and the Sātvata sages, to be her very own son."

46. The king said:

“O supreme Brahman, what did Nanda do to obtain such great fortune? And what did the greatly fortunate Yaśodā do, that Hari drank from her breast?

47. His mother and father did not ful ll their desire of experiencing

the wonderful childhood activities of Kṛṣṇa. These can eradicate the

sins of the world. Even to this day, sages sing of them.”

48. Śrī Śuka said: “Once, previously, Droṇa, best of the Vasus, accompanied by his wife, Dharā, said to Brahmā: ‘I will follow the

orders of Lord Brahmā.

49. When we are born on earth, supreme bhakti [devotion] to Hari, the Lord of the Universe, and the Supreme God on earth, will

ourish. Through this bhakti, one can easily overcome the miseries of this world.’

50. ‘Let it be so,’ was the reply. He, the greatly fortunate Droṇa, of

wide renown, was born in Vraj and became known as Nanda, and

she, Dharā, became Yaśodā!

51. Thereafter, O Parīkṣit, descendant of Bharata, eternal devotion

to Lord Janārdana [Kṛṣṇa], who had become their son, was manifest

in the husband and wife and in the gopas and gopīs.

52. In order to ful ll the order of Brahmā, Lord Kṛṣṇa resided in Vraj together with Balarāma, and enchanted them by His līlā.”

Kṛṣṇa's Favor to the Gopī Yaśodā

Bhāva Blueprint *This passage continues the vātsalya bhāva. Here we nd God in the mood of a naughty child, fearful because of His mischief, and Yaśodā in that of a loving, chastising parent. Despite Yaśodā's failed attempts to bind Kṛṣṇa with all the rope in her household, she still remains unaware that anything is untoward in the nature of her child. Such is the power of yogamāyā. The passage ends with Kṛṣṇa becoming compliant in His own binding: bhakti is reciprocal, and from His side, Kṛṣṇa is just as committed to succumbing to His devotees as they are to succumbing to Him.*

Book X, Chapter 9

1. "One time, when the house servants were busy with other chores,

Yaśodā, the wife of Nanda, churned the milk herself.

2. Remembering the songs about the activities of her child, she sang

them while she was churning yogurt.

3. Yaśodā churned, swaying back and forth. Her bracelets were

moving on her arms, which were tired from pulling the rope, and

her earrings were swinging to and fro. Mālatī [jasmine] owers dropped from her hair, and her face, with its beautiful eyebrows, was sweating. She wore a linen cloth bound by a girdle on her broad, sloping hips, and her quivering breasts were leaking milk out of a ection for her son.

4. Hari approached His mother as she was churning, desiring to drink her breast milk. Grasping the stirring stick, He obstructed her,

demanding her love.

5. He climbed on her lap. Looking at His smiling face, she allowed Him to drink from her breast, which was leaking milk from

a ection. But before He was satis ed she put Him down in a hurry

and rushed o when the milk that had been on the re boiled over.

6. Furious and biting His quivering red lower lip with His teeth, Kṛṣṇa broke the butter-churning pot with a stone. With false tears in

His eyes He went inside to a hiding place and ate the freshly churned butter.

7. Yaśodā removed the boiling milk and came in again. Noticing the

broken vessel, she saw what her son had done. Not nding Him

there, she laughed.

8. She spied Him standing on top of the base of a rice-husking mortar. He was wantonly giving fresh butter to a monkey from a hanging pot, looking anxious on account of His thieving. She

approached her son stealthily from behind.

9. Seeing her with stick in hand, Kṛṣṇa hastily climbed down from

there and ed, as if in fear. The gopī ran after Him whom the minds of yogīs, directed by the power of asceticism, are not able to reach.

10. The slender-waisted mother chased Kṛṣṇa, her progress slowed

by the burden of her broad, moving hips. A trail of owers falling

from her loosened plait in her wake, she seized Him.

11. Grasping His arm, she chastised Him, scaring Him. Looking up

with eyes agitated with fright, the guilty boy was crying and

rubbing His eyes, smearing the mascara with His hands.

12. Yaśodā was fond of her child, and so threw away the stick when

she realized her son was frightened. Unaware of the power of her

son, she wanted to bind Him with a rope.

13. Kṛṣṇa has no beginning and no end, no inside and no outside.

He is the beginning and end and inside and outside of the universe.

He is the universe.

14. The gopī tied Him with a rope to the mortar as if He were a common being. She considered Kṛṣṇa, who is the unmanifest truth

beyond sense perception in the form of a human, to be her own son.

15. The rope for binding her guilty child was short by two ngers.

So the gopī joined another one to the rst.

16. When that also was too short, she joined another one to it, but

however many ropes she brought out, they were always two ngers

lacking.

17. In this way, while all the gopīs chuckled with amusement, Yaśodā joined together all the ropes in her household. Smiling, she

was struck with wonder.

18. Seeing the e orts of His mother, whose limbs were sweating and

whose wreath of owers had fallen from her hair, Kṛṣṇa became

compliant in His own binding.

19. Indeed, by this act, dear Parīkṣit, the quality of submission to

[His] devotee was demonstrated by Hari [Kṛṣṇa] despite the fact that He is only constrained by His own free will. By Him this universe, along with those who control it, is controlled.

20. Neither Brahmā, nor Śiva, nor even Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune,

despite being united with His body, obtained the benediction which

the gopī obtained from Kṛṣṇa, the giver of liberation.

21. God, this son of the gopī, is not attained as easily in this world by embodied beings, nor by the wise, nor by the knowers of the self,

as He is by those who have devotion."

The Killing of the Calf Demon Bhāva Blueprint *In our nal vātsalya bhāva passage, we again see a variety of delightful examples of Kṛṣṇa reciprocating with His beloved bhaktas , submitting out of love to their control "like a wooden puppet."*

Book X, Chapter 11

[Preamble: In the previous chapter, after numerous attempts on Kṛṣṇa's life by various demons, Yaśodā had tied Kṛṣṇa to a mortar for His safekeeping. Kṛṣṇa then dragged the mortar between two trees. It wedged between them and eventually uprooted both trees as He kept crawling.

Two celestial beings emerged from these trees: owing to their

inappropriate behavior, they had been cursed by Nārada to take birth as trees, but blessed that these trees would be in Nanda's courtyard, where they would be liberated by Kṛṣṇa.]

1. Śrī Śuka said: "After hearing the thundering sounds of the falling trees, all the gopas, headed by Nanda, approached the place full of fear of an earthquake, O Parīkṣit, best of the Kurus.

2.–3. There, they saw the pair of arjuna trees fallen on the ground.

They were bewildered, unable to understand the cause of their fall

even though it was in plain view—the child, bound by a rope and

dragging the rice-husking mortar. But they were doubtful, saying:

'Whose [work] is this? How has this amazing calamity come about?'

4. The boys said: '[It was done] by Kṛṣṇa over there as he was going

through, dragging the mortar, which then fell crossways. And we also saw two beings.'

5. The gopas were unable to accept what was said: 'That could not have happened,' they declared. Some found it incredible that such

an uprooting of the trees could be caused by the small boy.

6. Naturally, after seeing His own son bound and dragging the

mortar by a rope, Nanda, smiling, freed Him.

7. Applauded by the gopīs, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa would sometimes dance like a child, and sometimes sing innocently. Like a wooden puppet,

He was controlled by them.

8. Sometimes, on command, He would carry a stool, measure, or

slippers, or He would sometimes throw His arms about, arousing the

love of His relatives.

9. For those who could understand, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa manifested the condition of [submitting] himself to the control of His dependents in

this world. Truly, He brought joy to the residents of Vraj by His childhood activities.

10. [Once], upon hearing, 'Hey! Come and buy fruits!' Acyuta

[Kṛṣṇa], the bestower of all fruits, grabbed some grains [as

exchange] and rushed out, desiring fruit.

11. As the grain was falling from His hands, the woman fruit-seller lled both of Acyuta's [Kṛṣṇa's] hands with fruit, and Kṛṣṇa lled the fruit container with jewels.

12. [On another occasion] Kṛṣṇa, who had shattered the trees, went

to the bank of the river and was absorbed in playing with the boys.

After some time, Queen Rohiṇī called both Him and Balarāma.

13. The two boys did not present themselves when called, because

of their absorption in the game. So Rohiṇī sent Yaśodā, who had great a ection for her son.

14. Yaśodā called her son, who, along with his elder brother, was

still playing with the boys even though Their time for play had run

out. Her breasts were leaking milk out of love for her son: 15.

'Kṛṣṇa, lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, my young one, come, drink from my

breast. Enough games! You are hungry and exhausted from playing,

O son.

16. Hey, Balarāma, my son, the darling of the family, come quickly

with your younger brother. You have had only breakfast early in the

morning, so you must eat.

17. O Dāśārha [Kṛṣṇa], the chief of Vraj is waiting for you, wishing

to eat. Come, bring us both your love. Boys—return to your own homes.

18. Your body is black with dust, my son. Come and take your bath.

Today is your birthday; clean up and donate cows to the brāhmaṇas.

19. Look, look at the boys your age—they are scrubbed clean by their mothers and adorned beautifully. You, too, should enjoy

yourself after you are bathed, nicely adorned and well fed.'

20. In this way, Yaśodā, her mind bound by a ection, considered Kṛṣṇa, who is the Absolute Truth, to be her son. Grasping Acyuta

[Kṛṣṇa] along with Balarāma by the hand, she led Them to Their own compound, and then performed the rites for prosperity."

21. Śrī Śuka said: "After experiencing the great disturbances in Bṛhadvana, the great forest (Gokula),19 the elders of the cowherd

men, led by Nanda, gathered together and deliberated on the a airs of Vraj.

22. In that gathering, a gopa by name of Upananda, who was advanced in age and knowledge, spoke up. He was a well-wisher of

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and someone who understood time, place, and

the cause of things: 23. 'We, who desire the welfare of Gokula, should depart from this place. Major calamities are on their way here aimed at the destruction of the boys.

24. Somehow or other, that boy was saved from the child—

slaughtering demoness. 20 What is more, by the grace of God, the cart did not fall on top of him.

25. Then he was whisked up to disaster in the sky by the demon in

the form of a whirlwind.21 He fell on a rock over there, but was saved by the powerful demigods.

26. That this boy or someone else was not killed after nding

himself between the two trees is also owing to the protection of Acyuta [Viṣṇu].

27. For as long as such calamitous misfortunes overrun Vraj, let us

take the boys away from here and go somewhere else along with our followers.

28. There is a forest called Vṛndāvana, which is t for habitation by

the gopas, gopīs, and cows. It has fresh groves, plants, grass, and sacred mountains.

29. Therefore, if this is pleasing to you all, let us go there this very day. Yoke the carts without delay. Our herds of cows should set out

and go in front.'

30. When they heard this, the gopas unanimously declared: 'Well said! Well said!' They fastened together their respective cowpens and set out, laden with their domestic chattels.

31.–32. After placing the elderly, the children, women, and chattels

on the carts, and with their cows in front, the cowherd men set out

with their priests, O king. Fully alert with bows in hand, they blew their horns in every direction and made loud trumpet sounds.

33. Seated on the carts, the gopīs looked beautiful. Dressed attractively with golden ornaments at their necks, and with fresh kuṅkuma powder on their breasts, they took pleasure in singing about Kṛṣṇa's līlā.

34. Yaśodā and Rohiṇī were seated on the same cart. They were delighted by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and eager to hear those

narrations.

35. They entered Vṛndāvana, and set up their cowherd camp there,

with their carts arranged like a half-moon. It was a place that brings

happiness in all seasons."

Sakhya Bhāva: Kṛṣṇa as Playful Friend

Bhāva Blueprint *The sakhya bhāva featured in the next passages is characterized by a mood of equality between bhakta and Bhagavān . While there are various forms of friendship, those featured in the Vraj līlā are of very young boys playfully whiling away their days in fun and frolics in the forests of Vraj as they graze their cows.*

Book X, Chapter 11 (continued) *36. Seeing Vṛndāvana, Mount Govardhana, and the sandbanks of the Yamunā river, Balarāma and Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa] experienced great joy.*

37. The two boys became, in time, caretakers of the calves, amusing

the residents of Vraj with Their childish antics and unformed words.

38. Accompanied by the cowherd boys and [equipped] with

paraphernalia for di erent games, They grazed the calves nearby, in

the land of Vraj.

39.–40. Imitating the animals with Their cries, They roamed like two mortals. Sometimes They played utes, sometimes They let y

with slings, sometimes [They played] with Their feet, Their ankle bells [jingling], and sometimes, acting like bulls with other pretend

bulls and cows, They fought each other, roaring.

41. One time, a demon came to the banks of the Yamunā, intending to kill Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma while They were grazing Their cows with

Their young friends.

42. Seeing the demon, in the form of a calf, enter the herd of calves, Hari slowly approached, pretending to be unaware, while pointing

him out to Balarāma.

43. Seizing him by his rear legs and his tail, Kṛṣṇa whirled him around and hurled him lifeless to the top of a kapittha tree.

Assuming a huge body, the demon fell, along with the kapittha trees, which he brought crashing down.

44. Seeing that, the boys were amazed and praised Kṛṣṇa: "Well done! Well done!" The celestials, showering Them with owers,

were all delighted.

45. The two boys, the sole keepers of the whole universe, became

keepers of calves. Taking Their breakfast with them, They roamed

here and there, grazing the calves.

The Killing of the Demon Agha Bhāva Blueprint *The fun and frolics of the gopa boys in this passage give an excellent sense of the intimate nature of sakhya bhāva . The mood of this bhāva is that the bhakta sees God as an equal. We can note here that despite the seeming equality of the boys with Kṛṣṇa, all their games and activities are undertaken with their focus fully centered on Him, the indispensable element of bhakti . We see here, too, the boys' simple but unbreakable faith in Kṛṣṇa even in the jaws of death. Also of interest is that even Kṛṣṇa Himself is surprised at the marvelous workings of His power of yogamāyā.*

Book X, Chapter 12

1. One day, Hari decided to have breakfast in the forest. After arising at dawn and waking up His gopa friends with the pleasant sound of His horn, he set out, herding the calves in front.

2. Thousands of comely boys, equipped with utes, bugle horns,

sta s, and slings, joined Him. Accompanied by thousands of calves,

the boys, each driving his own before him, set out merrily.

3. Joining their own calves with the numberless calves of Kṛṣṇa, the

cowherd boys diverted themselves in līlā while they grazed their cows here and there.

4. Although they were decorated with gold, jewels, guñjā berries, and crystals, the boys adorned themselves with minerals, peacock

feathers, bunches of owers, young shoots, and fruits.

5. They stole each other's slings and various objects and, when detected, threw them at a distance, from where others then threw

them farther still. Eventually they returned them, laughing.

6. If Kṛṣṇa went far o to view the beauty of the forest, they would

enjoy themselves by [running up and] touching Him, saying: "I was

rst, I was rst!"

7. Some played their utes, some blew their horns, others hummed

with the bees, and still others cooed with the cuckoos.

8. They chased the shadowless birds, moved gracefully with the

swans, seated themselves with the cranes, and danced with the

peacocks.

9. Tugging at the young monkeys, they climbed the trees with them.

Then, imitating them, they joined them in swinging through the

trees.

10. Jumping about with the frogs, they got soaked by splashes from

the river. They laughed at their own shadows and hurled abuse at

their echoes.

11. Thus, those boys who had accumulated an abundance of merit

roamed about joyfully with Kṛṣṇa. He is the experience of the bliss

of Brahman for the wise, the Supreme Deity for those who are dedicated to His service, and the child of a human being for those

who are absorbed in ignorance.

12. Although the dust of His feet is not obtained by yogīs with disciplined minds, even after many births undertaking ascetic

practices, He has personally become an object of vision for the people of Vraj. How, then, can their fortune be described?

13. At that time, a great demon named Agha rushed out. Wanting to

protect their own lives, the immortals constantly longed for his death, even though they had drunk the nectar of immortality. Agha

could not tolerate the sight of the boys' happy games.

14. The demon Agha was the younger brother of Baka and Bakī

[Pūtanā], and had previously been dispatched by Kaṁsa [to kill

Kṛṣṇa]. He saw that the boys were led by Kṛṣṇa: "This is

undoubtedly the one who brought destruction to my siblings. I will

kill him, with his friends, as retribution for those two [siblings] of

mine," he said.

15. "When they have been made into sesame and water [as

oblations] for my kinsmen, then the residents of Vraj will be as good

as nished. When the vital airs have left, what need is there to worry about the body? Children are the very breath of all beings that possess vital airs."

16. After thus resolving, the evildoer assumed the spectacular body

of a huge boa constrictor. It extended for one yojana,22 was as dense as a mountain, and had a mouth like a gaping cave. Agha then lay

on the path in the hope of swallowing [the children].

17. His lower lip was the ground, and his upper lip the clouds. The

inside of his mouth was a cave, his teeth the peaks of mountains,

and there was darkness inside his jaws. His tongue was an extended

highway, his breath a pungent wind, and the glow of his glare was

like re.

18. After seeing this thing there in such a form, everyone thought it

to be one of Vṛndāvana's attractions, and playfully imagined that it

resembled the mouth of an extended boa constrictor.

19. "Hey, friends, say: Does this heap of a creature lying ahead resemble the mouth of a snake stretched out to devour us, or not?

20. In truth, the cloud reddened by the sun's rays is like its upper

jaw, and the bank, copper colored by its re ection, is like its lower

jaw.

21. Look: the two mountain caves on the left and the right resemble

the corners of its mouth, and even these high mountain peaks

resemble its teeth.

22. Moreover, this highway in length and breadth seems like a tongue, and this darkness within it is like the inside of a mouth.

23. Look—this pungent air, hot with re, seems like breath, and this

foul odor of burnt creatures is just like the smell of dead esh inside

it.

24. Will it devour us as we enter it? If so, it will be destroyed in an

instant by Kṛṣṇa as Baka was." Thinking thus, the boys glanced at

the beautiful face of Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Baka, and ventured in, laughing and clapping their hands.

25. Bhagavān heard the discussion among the boys about this spurious [creature]—even though they were unaware of what it

actually was. Since He is situated in the hearts of all creatures, He

knew that it was really a demon pretending to be what it was not,

and so decided to hold His friends back.

26. Meanwhile, however, the boys, along with their calves, had

already entered the belly of the demon. But they were not devoured

by him since he, remembering his intimate friends who had been killed by Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Baka, was awaiting Kṛṣṇa's arrival.

27. Kṛṣṇa, who bestows fearlessness on everyone, saw that the poor boys, who knew no Lord other than Him, had slipped beyond His control and were like grass in the re of the stomach of death. He was surprised at the workings of Fate, and was lled with compassion.

28. But what was to be done in this situation? Kṛṣṇa wondered how two purposes could be achieved—how to kill the wicked one without harming the innocent boys. He deliberated, made a decision, and entered that mouth.

29. At this the celestials, hiding in the clouds, exclaimed, "Alas! Alas!" from fear, but the corpse-eating demon friends of Agha, such as Kaṁsa, were lled with joy.

30. When He heard this, the imperishable Bhagavān swelled up in the throat of the demon, who was intent on crushing Him as well as the boys and calves.

31. At this, the vital airs of the demon's huge body were blocked, and lled the interior of the body; but the outlets were stopped up, and so the eyes popped out and rolled here and there. Then the vital airs burst out of the hole in the top of the head, and escaped outside.

32. As all the vital airs were seeping out, Bhagavān Mukunda

[Kṛṣṇa] brought His dead friends and the calves back to life with His

glance. Then He reemerged from the mouth, together with them.

33. An amazing great light rose up from the thick coils of the snake,

illuminating the ten directions with its splendor. It waited in the sky

for the Lord to emerge, and then entered into Him before the very

eyes of the residents of the celestial realms. [*23*]

34. Everyone was overjoyed at this, and they all o ered worship with their own particular activities—the celestials with owers, the

celestial apsarās with dance, those who sang beautifully with songs, musicians with instrumental music, the brāhmaṇas with hymns of praise, and the crowds with the sound of "Victory (jaya)!"

35. The unborn Brahmā heard those many celebrations of wonderful

hymns, beautiful music, songs, and [sounds of] "Victory!" and

hastened there from his abode, which was nearby. Seeing the

greatness of the Lord, he was struck with wonder.

36. The amazing dry skin of the boa became an amusement-cave in

Vṛndāvana for the residents of Vraj for many months.

37. This deed—Hari's escape from death by the serpent—occurred

during the kaumāra period of life [one to ve years]. Yet the boys who had seen it related it in Vraj during the pauganḍa period [six to sixteen years].

38. There is nothing in this that is astonishing for Kṛṣṇa. By His māyā potency, He [appeared] as a small human boy, but He is the

supreme creator of both the highest and the lowest. Even Agha had

his sins cleansed by Kṛṣṇa's touch, and achieved ātmasāmya[24]

liberation—attaining the same form as God—which is very di cult for the sinful to achieve.

39. Kṛṣṇa bestows the devotional path [to one who] once

internalizes a mental image of Kṛṣṇa's body. Such a person is

completely freed from māyā, and experiences the eternal happiness of the ātman. What is there to say, then, when [the Lord] has entered inside a person?

40. Śrī Śuka said: "In this way, O brāhmaṇas, Parīkṣit heard about the wonderful activities of His benefactor. [25] *With his mind focused, he again asked Vaiyāsaki [Śuka] about Kṛṣṇa's purifying activities."*

41. The king said:

“How can something relating to a particular period of time be

performed in another period of time, O brāhmaṇa? That which the

boys related in the pauganḍa period was performed by Hari in the kaumāra period.

42. Tell me this, O great yogī. I am extremely curious, O guru. Surely this must be nothing other than the māyā of Hari?

43. Although we only pose as kṣatriyas, we are in fact the most fortunate people in the world, because we continually drink the purifying nectar of the stories [about Kṛṣṇa] from you.”

44. Śrī Śuka said: “When he was questioned in this way, O most eminent of devotees, Śuka, son of Bādarāyaṇa, lost the functions of

all his senses in remembering Ananta [Kṛṣṇa]. He then regained

awareness of his surroundings with di culty, and slowly replied to

the king.”

Kṛṣṇa Manifests as the Calves and Cowherd Boys Bhāva Blueprint *In this extraordinary passage, Kṛṣṇa becomes each and every cowherd boy and calf for an entire year in order to satisfy the secret bhāva aspirations of the other elder gopīs and gopas, as well as the cows, who had always hankered to have Kṛṣṇa as their very own child and o spring. The plot is subtle: the original cowherd boys and calves are placed in a dormant state and are unaware of this entire episode. We can also note an important theological message imparted by this tale: even the most intelligent Being in the entire universe, Brahmā, the secondary creator, is utterly incapable of understanding the nature of Kṛṣṇa; what, then, of common mortals?!*

Book X, Chapter 13

1. Śrī Śuka said: “You have raised an appropriate question, O greatly fortunate Parīkṣit. Although we hear the narrations of the Lord repeatedly, you make them fresh, O best of devotees.

2. This is the natural mentality of saintly persons who cultivate only

the essence [of truth]; their minds, ears, and voices are used only

for that purpose. This is because pure discussion about Acyuta

[Kṛṣṇa] always seems fresh, just like discussion about women is always fresh for debauchees.

3. Listen attentively, O king, and I will tell you, even though it is

con dential. Actually, gurus explain even con dential things to their a ectionate disciples.

4. After saving the calf-keepers from death in the mouth of Agha,

Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa led them to the sandy bank of the river, and spoke as follows: 5. ‘Hey, friends, the sandy beach is really delightful and

covered with soft, clear sandbanks for our play. It is lled with trees

reverberating with the sounds and echoes of birds, and of bees attracted by the scent of lotuses in ower.

6. The day is advanced: we should eat our meal here. The calves,

who are hungry, may graze at leisure nearby, after they have drunk

water.’

7. ‘Let’s do it,’ the boys said. After the boys had watered the calves,

they climbed onto the grassy place, opened their sling bags, and enjoyed their meal, together with the happy Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa.

8. The boys of Vraj sat in many rows encircling Kṛṣṇa, with their faces turned toward Him. Their eyes were wide with joy, and they

glowed like petals round the pericarp of a lotus ower.

9. Some of them made plates from petals and owers, and others used shoots, sprouts, fruits, slings, bark, and rocks; then they ate.

10. All of them showed one another the di erent samples of the things they each were eating. Laughing and making one another

laugh, they ate their food along with the Lord.

11. While the residents of svarga [the celestial region] looked on, Kṛṣṇa, the enjoyer of sacri ces, took pleasure engaging in childish

play. He carried a ute in the garments around His stomach, and a

horn and a sta in His belt. In His left hand was a tender morsel of

food, and in His ngers were pieces of fruit. Standing in the middle

of His circle of intimate friends, He made them laugh with His games.

12. However, O Parīkṣit, descendant of Bharata, while the keepers

of the calves, whose very soul was Acyuta [Kṛṣṇa], were eating in

this fashion, the cows wandered far into the forest, tempted by grass.

13. Seeing the boys struck by fear, Kṛṣṇa, who is the fear of the fears

of this world, said to them: 'Do not stop eating, friends. I will fetch

the calves back myself.'

14. Having said this, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, a morsel of food in His hand, went o to look for their calves in mountains, caves, groves, and thickets.

15. Meanwhile, the lotus-born Brahmā came to see yet another

pleasing wonder of the Lord who had become a boy by His māyā.

Previously he had been greatly astonished after descending from the

celestial realms and seeing the liberation of Aghasura by the

eminent Kṛṣṇa. He led the calves and calf-herders away from there

to some other place, O best of the Kurus, and then disappeared.

16. Failing to nd the calves after some time, or, after going to the

riverbank, the calf-herders either, Kṛṣṇa searched thoroughly for both in the forest.

17. Needless to say, not nding the calves and the calf-keepers anywhere inside the forest, Kṛṣṇa, the knower of the universe,

immediately understood everything that had been done by Brahmā.

18. Thereupon Kṛṣṇa, the Lord and maker of the universe,

transformed His own self into both [the calves and the boys] in

order to give pleasure to the mothers of those [calves and calf-herders] as well as to Brahmā. 26

19. He took the form of as many little bodies of calves and calf-herders as there were calves and calf-herders, with as many hands

and feet and bodily parts. He assumed the shape of as many sta s,

horns, utes, petals, slings, ornaments, and garments, and adopted

as many behaviors, qualities, names, appearances, and ages, and as

many playful personalities. The unborn One, who is the form of everything, became as if an a rmation of the saying 'Everything is

the māyā of Viṣṇu.'27

20. Then Kṛṣṇa took care of His calves, who were His own self, by

Himself in the form of the calf-herders. The Self of everything entered Vraj, playing games with Himself [in the form of the calves

and boys].

21. After leading each and every one of the calves separately, Kṛṣṇa

made them enter into their respective cowsheds and He then

entered into each and every house. He existed as each and every entity, O king.

22. Their mothers hastily rose up at the sound of the utes, picked

[the boys] up in their arms, and embraced them profusely. Thinking

the Supreme Brahman to be their sons, they then made Them drink

the nectar of their breast milk, which was owing from love.

23. Thus Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa], after engaging in the regular schedule of

the day, came to the evening, O king, giving joy with His activities.

He was then tenderly attended to with massage, a bath, the

application of scents, ornaments, protective mantras, sacred clay, food, and other things.

24. Meanwhile the cows hurried toward the cowsheds and suckled

their respective calves, who had assembled there, summoned by the

sounds of the cows' mooing. The cows licked the calves repeatedly,

milk owing from their udders.

25. The motherliness of the cows and the gopīs toward Kṛṣṇa was just the same as [it had been for their own calves and sons]

previously, except that now there was an increase in a ection, and

the lial behavior of Hari toward them was the same [as that of the

real calves and sons], except without the illusion.

26. The a ection of the people of Vraj for their own sons grew gradually, like a creeping plant, day by day throughout the year. It

was not the same as before; it was without limits, just as it had been

for Kṛṣṇ[a.28](#)

27. In this way, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul as a cowherd boy, herded

Himself by means of Himself through the assumed forms of the

calves and calf-herders, and sported in the forests and cow pastures

for an entire year.

28. On one occasion, when ve or six nights remained to complete

the year, the unborn Kṛṣṇa, who was grazing the calves with

Balarāma, entered the forest.

29. At that time, the cows, who were grazing on the grass at the top

of Mount Govardhana, saw the calves grazing far away near Vraj.

30. On seeing them, the cows were overcome with love for their calves. Forgetting themselves, they hastened along on two [pairs of]

legs by a path that was hard going even for their own keepers. Their

heads and tails were raised, their necks were [stretched back] onto

their humps, they were making lowing sounds, and their milk was

owing.

31. After meeting the calves below, the cows made them drink milk

from their own udders, even though they possessed calves [of their

own]. They also licked their limbs as if they were going to swallow

them.

32. The gopas were furious with embarrassment at the failure of their e orts to prevent them. They approached by the same arduous

route with di culty, and saw their sons with the calves.

33. Their hearts were overwhelmed by a loving surge of rasa at seeing them. A ection was kindled and their anger was dispelled.

They lifted up the boys, embraced them with their arms, and

experienced the highest ecstasy by smelling their heads.

34. After this, the adult gopas departed slowly and with di culty.

Their minds were happy from embracing their children and tears

welled up at the memory of them.

35. Balarāma noticed the Vraj community's constant longing for

their o spring because of this increase in love, even though these o spring had been weaned. Not knowing the cause, He thought: 36.

'What is this amazing thing? The love of the community of Vraj, and

of Myself, for the children is growing as it never has before, as if it

were for Vāsudeva, the soul of everything.

37. Who is this being [who has caused this] and why has she

created this condition? Is she a divine being, a woman, or even a

demoness? In all probability it is the māyā [illusion] of My Lord Kṛṣṇa. There is no other entity that can bewilder even Me.'

38. Thinking this, Balarāma understood with the eye of knowledge

that the calves and all the companions as well were Kṛṣṇa, the Lord

of Vaikuṇṭha.

39. 'These are not lords of the demigods, nor are they sages; it is You Yourself, O Lord, who are manifest in these individual forms.

Tell Me brie y—how did their separate existence come about?'

Balarāma eagerly absorbed the turn of events from the Lord whom

He had addressed in this way.

40. Meanwhile, Brahmā, the self-generated god, returned after a

period of time which, by his standards, was merely an instant. He

saw that Hari had been playing throughout the year with Himself transformed [into the forms of His companions] just like before: 41.

'However many boys and their calves there were in Gokula, that same number are all sleeping in the bed of my māyā. To this very day, none of them has reawakened.

42. So where do these boys who have been playing here together with Viṣṇu for one year come from? They are di erent from those

there [in the hiding place] who are bewildered by my māyā, although they are certainly the same in number.'

43. After pondering thus on these di erences for a long time, the self-generated Brahmā was not able to understand in any form or fashion which of the two [sets of boys and calves] was real and which not.

44. Thus, in causing illusion for Viṣṇu, who is free from illusion and

who deludes the whole universe, even the unborn Brahmā was in

fact himself deluded by his very own māyā.

45. Inferior māyā used on a superior person destroys the power of the person invoking it, just like the darkness of fog is destroyed in

the night, or the light of a glowworm in the day.

46. Meanwhile, as the unborn Brahmā was watching, all the calves

and herders suddenly became dark as rain clouds and appeared

wearing yellow silk garments.

47. They had four arms and held the conch, disc, club, and lotus in

Their hands. They wore helmets, earrings, pearl necklaces, and

garlands of forest owers.

48. They were adorned with the śrīvatsa [tuft of hair], arm-bracelets, and two jeweled conch bangles and bracelets on Their wrists. They glittered with foot-bracelets, arm-bracelets, belts, and nger rings.

49. Their bodies were covered from head to toe with soft garlands of

fresh tulasī,29 which is o ered by those who excel in piety.

50. With radiant, moonlike smiles, and glances from the reddish-colored corners of Their eyes, They looked like the creators and protectors of the needs of Their devotees by means of sattva and rajas.

51. They were venerated in various ways by many forms of worship.

These included singing and dancing by all moving and non-moving

embodied entities—from the rst being, Brahmā, down to the clump of grass.

52. They were surrounded by the mystic powers such as aṇima [the ability to become minute]; the potencies such as that of māyā; and the twenty-four elements such as the mahat.

53. They were worshipped by Time, nature, the saṁskāras, desire, karma, and the guṇas, and so forth, all of them possessing form.

Their greatness was eclipsed by the personal greatness of Viṣṇu.

54. The forms were only of one rasa, essence: truth, knowledge, and unlimited bliss.30 Their unlimited glory had not been experienced even by the seers of the Upaniṣads themselves.

55. In this fashion, Brahmā, the unborn one, saw everything

simultaneously as the personal self of the Supreme Brahman, from whom the appearance of everything in this world, moving and non-moving, manifests.

56. Then Brahmā, the unborn one, opened his eyes wide with

amazement, his eleven senses31 stunned, and fell silent before that majesty. He was like a doll before the local goddess of a town.

57. Thus he was unable to understand that [Absolute Truth], which

is beyond reason, which is self-manifest, which stands in its own glory, and which is established in the principal Vedic texts by the

elimination of that which it is not. 32 'What is this?' he thought.

When Brahmā, the lord of Irā [Sarasvatī], was bewildered in this way, Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental, unborn, Supreme Being, understood

and instantly concealed His māyā.

58. Then, Brahmā, who had regained his material vision, stood up

like a corpse [that had come back to life]. Opening his eyes with di culty, he saw the entire universe, along with his own self.

59. Immediately looking around in all directions, he saw Vṛndāvana

in front of him. It was spread with trees, which a ord a livelihood

for the inhabitants, and with other desirable things.

60. In Vṛndāvana, those who by nature live in enmity, such as man and deer, lived together like friends. Craving and anger, and other

such negative qualities, dissolved in the abode of Ajita [Kṛṣṇa].

61. There, Brahmā, the supreme deity, saw Kṛṣṇa, the absolute

Brahman, continuing to act as a child in the family of cowherd folk.

The one Supreme eternal Being, who is without a second, and whose

knowledge is without limit, was searching all over for His friends and His calves, with a tasty morsel in His hand, just as before.

62. Seeing this, Brahmā quickly got down from his vehicle, and prostrated himself upon the ground like a golden rod. He touched

Kṛṣṇa's two feet with the crest of his four crowns[33] *and worshipped Him with a bathing ceremony performed using auspicious tears of*

joy.

63. He continued rising repeatedly and then falling at the two feet

of Kṛṣṇa for a long time, remembering again and again the grandeur

that he had just seen.

64. Then, getting up slowly in humility and wiping his eyes. Brahmā

gazed at Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa]. Stammering and trembling he

worshipped Kṛṣṇa with a stream of prayers, his neck bent in

submission, his hands folded in supplication, and his mind intent."

The Killing of the Demon Dhenuka Bhāva Blueprint *Continuing in the mood of sakhya, we see in this passage that bhāva is not unidirectional: Kṛṣṇa is just as keen to please His devotees and satisfy their wishes as they are to please Him. Also, we can note that since Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, is a manifestation of Viṣṇu, He is addressed as such in the opening verses.*

Book X, Chapter 15

1. Śrī Śuka said: "Thereafter, when They had attained the age of pauganḍa [six to sixteen years], the two boys were approved as cowherd men in Vraj. Herding the cows along with Their friends, the two made Vṛndāvana sacred with Their footprints.

2. At that time, looking for sport, Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa], accompanied by

Balarāma and with His cows in front, entered a forest that was

suitable for cattle and covered with owers. He was playing His ute and was surrounded by gopas telling of His glories.

3. Seeing the forest full of the delightful sounds of bees, deer, and

birds, Bhagavān turned His mind to pleasure. The forest was enticing, abounding as it did with ponds whose water was as clear

as the minds of great souls, and [swept] by a wind scented by hundred-petaled [lotuses].

4. Kṛṣṇa, the original person, saw the forest trees, beautiful with reddish buds, their tops [bent down] to touch His two feet

everywhere through the weight of their abundant owers and fruits.

Smiling a little with delight, He spoke to His elder brother.

5. Śrī Bhagavān said: ‘Just see, O best of Gods! After gathering o erings of jasmine owers and fruits, these trees are bowing down

their heads to Your lotus feet, which are worshipped by immortals.

This is in order to terminate their birth as trees, which was attained

through ignorance.

6. These bees are singing of Your glories, which are the subject of

veneration for the whole world. As they pursue You along the way,

they are worshipping You, O original Person! They are mostly the

hosts of sages, Your most fervent devotees [from past lives].

Although deep in the forest, they do not abandon the Lord of their

heart, O One without sin.

7. The forest-dwellers are truly fortunate. These peacocks are

dancing, O praiseworthy One, and the does are joyfully soliciting Your a ection with glances as if they were gopīs. The ocks of cuckoos [welcome] You with Vedic hymns, since You have come to

their home. Such is the greatness of the nature of saints.

8. Fortunate is the earth, today: the grass and plants have been touched by Your feet and the trees and creepers have been brushed

by Your nails. The rivers and mountains, birds and animals, [have

been embraced] by Your merciful glances, and the gopīs have [been

enfolded] in Your two arms, which are desired even by Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune.’”

9. Śrī Śuka said: “In this way Kṛṣṇa enjoyed beautiful Vṛndāvana, happy in spirit, grazing the cows on the mountain river banks

together with His friends.

10. Sometimes when the bees sang, blinded with intoxication,

Kṛṣṇa, whose deeds are sung, would sing along the way with His followers. He was accompanied by Saṅkarṣaṇa [Balarāma].

11. Sometimes He would honk in imitation of the honking swans.

Sometimes He would dance in imitation of the dancing peacocks,

giving rise to laughter.

12. Sometimes, in a voice that was pleasing to the cows and

cowherd boys and was as deep as the rumbling of a cloud, He would

call by name the cows who had strayed far o .

13. He would imitate the sounds of birds such as the cakora, krauñca, cakravāka, bhāradvāja, and peacock, as if afraid of the tigers and lions from the animal kingdom.

14. At other times He would give relief to His elder brother by personally massaging His feet, etc., as Balarāma, fatigued from

playing, used the lap of a gopa as a cushion.

15. Sometimes, holding hands and laughing, the two boys would

urge on the cowherd boys in their dancing, singing, jumping about,

and wrestling with each other.

16. Sometimes, exhausted from the e ort of wrestling, Kṛṣṇa would

lie down on a bed of buds. Taking shelter at the base of a tree, He

would use the lap of a gopa as a pillow.

17. Some great souls would massage His feet and others, whose sins

had been eradicated, cooled Him with fans.

18. Others, their hearts moved with love, would softly sing songs for

that great Soul that were appropriate to the occasion and pleasing to

the mind.

19. In this way, Kṛṣṇa concealed His personal nature by His own māyā, and imitated the nature of the son of a cowherd man by His activities. Although He can conduct Himself as the Supreme Lord, and His budlike feet are caressed by the Goddess of Fortune, He can nonetheless enjoy Himself like a villager in the company of

villagers.

20. [Once], the cowherd boy called Śrīdāmā, a friend of Balarāma

and Keśava [Kṛṣṇa], and of the gopas such as Subala and Stokakṛṣṇa, spoke lovingly as follows: 21. 'O Balarāma, Balarāma! O mighty-armed Kṛṣṇa, scourge of miscreants! Not far from here is a huge forest full of rows of palmyra trees.

22. Abundant fruits have fallen and keep falling there, but they are

guarded by that evil soul Dhenuka.

23. O Balarāma! O Kṛṣṇa! He is an extremely powerful demon who

has assumed the form of a donkey! He is surrounded by many other

kinsmen whose strength is equal to his.

24. The forest is not frequented by humans and herds of cows

because they are terri ed of him, O destroyer of enemies—he has devoured human beings. It is even shunned by the ocks of birds.

25. Fragrant fruits that have never before been eaten are found there. In fact, this all-pervading fragrance [of the fruits] can be detected at this moment.

26. Obtain those fruits for us, Kṛṣṇa—our minds are disturbed by their smell. Our desire is great, Balarāma, so, if you like, let us go.'

27. After hearing those words from Their friends, the two Lords laughed. Surrounded by Their friends, They went to the palmyra forest, desiring to please them.

28. Balarāma entered and then, with strength like an elephant,

shook the palmyra trees with His arms, making the fruit drop.

29. When he heard the sound of the falling fruit, the donkey demon

came rushing up, making the surface of the earth, as well as its mountains, quake.

30. Encountering Balarāma, that mighty one turned around and struck Him on the chest with two of his legs. The wicked fellow circled Balarāma, making a kā sound.

31. The enraged ass attacked again. Rump-rst, it kicked furiously

at Balarāma with its two hind legs, O king.

32. Balarāma seized the donkey by two legs and whirled him around

with one hand. When the donkey had died from the whirling,

Balarāma hurled him to the top of a palm tree.

33. Struck by the donkey, the great palmyra tree with its huge top trembled, causing its neighboring tree to shake. This latter tree broke and made the

next tree shake, and that tree did likewise to

another.

34. Thus, struck by the dead body hurled e ortlessly by Balarāma,

all the trees shook as if agitated by a great wind.

35. This is not remarkable for Bhagavān, who is, after all, the unlimited Lord of the Universe. By Him, this universe is woven lengthwise and crosswise, like a cloth on threads, my dear Parīkṣit.34

36. Then all the donkeys of Dhenuka rushed toward Kṛṣṇa and

Rāma, furious that their relative had been slain.

37. Kṛṣṇa and Rāma seized each one of them by their rear legs as

they came hurtling forward, and threw them e ortlessly into the palm trees, O king.

38. The ground was colored with heaps of bodies of dead demons,

tops of trees, and fruit strewn about. It resembled the surface of the

sky colored by clouds.

39. When they heard of the pair's marvelous feat, the celestials released a shower of owers, played instruments, and o ered

eulogies.

40. Thus, people ate the fruit of the palm trees and the cows grazed

in the forest of the dead Dhenuka without fear.

41. After this, lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa returned home to Vraj to the praise

of His followers, the gopas. Hearing and reciting about Him are

means to puri cation.

42. The gopīs came forward in a body, their eyes hungry for a sight of Him. Smeared with the dust of cows, Kṛṣṇa had a charming smile

and delightful eyes. Forest owers and a peacock feather were

attached to the locks of His hair. He was playing His ute and His

glories were being sung by His followers.

43. After drinking the honey of Mukunda's face with their beelike

eyes, the women of Vraj cast o their fever born of separation during the day. After accepting that welcoming reception, conveyed

from the corners of the gopīs' eyes with modesty, giggles, and bashfulness, Kṛṣṇa entered the cow compound.

44. Yaśodā and Rohiṇī were a ectionate toward their boys, and

heaped their best blessing for the occasion upon their two sons, to

their hearts' content.

45. At home, the boys' weariness from the road was removed by bathing and massage, and so forth. They then dressed in beautiful

clothes and were adorned with lovely garlands and scents.

46. The two pampered boys ate the food o ered to Them by Their

mothers, lay down on the best-quality beds, and went happily to sleep in the land of Vraj.

47. Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān wandered around Vṛndāvana in this way, O

king."

The Killing of the Demon Pralamba Bhāva Blueprint *The mood of equality between Kṛṣṇa and His beloved gopa friends is further highlighted in this passage. Additionally, the landscape of Vraj described here gives a good sense of the actual nature of Goloka, the kingdom of God in the Brahman realm, for the Kṛṣṇa traditions.*

Book X, Chapter 18

1. Śrī Śuka said: "One day, surrounded and glori ed by his relatives, who were in a joyful mood, Kṛṣṇa entered Vraj. It was picturesque

with herds of cows.

2. While the two boys were sporting in Vraj in the māyā guise of cowherd boys, the summer season came, a season that is not very

pleasant for embodied beings.

3. However, because of the special features of Vṛndāvana— Bhagavān

himself, Keśava [Kṛṣṇa], was there with Balarāma—it exhibited the

qualities of spring.

4. In Vraj, the sound of waterfalls drowned the chirping crickets.

Spray from these waterfalls constantly fell on groups of trees.

5. There were abundant pastures there, and the forest-dwellers did

not experience the heat produced by the sun, res, and summer.

This was because of the breeze from the waves of waterfalls,

streams, and brooks that carried pollen from the blue lotuses,

bowers, and water lilies.

6. The erce rays of the sun, terrible as poison, did not drain everywhere, so the soil was saturated with waves from the shores of

the deepwater rivers.

7. The forest was beautiful, full of owers, and echoing with the sounds of various animals and birds, singing peacocks and bees, and

the noises of cuckoos and cranes.

8. Preparing to play, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa entered that forest vibrating His ute. He was accompanied by Balarāma and surrounded by the

gopas and their cows, which were Their riches.

9. The gopas, led by Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, were decorated with ornaments made from minerals, garlands, clusters of blossom,

peacock feathers, and fresh leaves. They danced, wrestled, and sang.

10. While Kṛṣṇa danced, some gopas sang, some made sounds with

horns and handclaps, while others applauded.

11. The gods, disguised as members of the cowherd clan, praised Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who had assumed the forms of cowherd men,

like dancers praise [other] dancers, O king.

12. Sporting sidelocks, the two boys played by whirling, jumping, hurling, slapping, dragging, and sometimes wrestling.

13. And sometimes the two boys Themselves became the singers and

players while others danced, O great king. They gave

encouragement, saying: 'Bravo! Bravo!'

14. Sometimes [They played] with bilva fruits, sometimes with kumbha fruits, and sometimes with handfuls of āmalaka fruits.

Sometimes They bound Their eyes, and [played] at not being

touched, and other such games, and sometimes They pretended to

be animals and birds.

15. Sometimes [They played] leapfrog or practical jokes, sometimes

on swings and sometimes at acting as kings.

16. In this way, the two [played] games that were familiar to people. They wandered about the forest, rivers, mountains, valleys,

bowers, woods, and lakes."

Madhura Bhāva: Kṛṣṇa as Amorous Lover

The Deliverance of the Wives of the Sacri cers Bhāva Blueprint *This passage concludes our sakhya bhāva section but includes madhura elements. We will save our comments on madhura for the following passage but alert the reader to note the di erence in the reaction of the wives of the brāhmaṇas to Kṛṣṇa's instruction to them to return to their husbands from the reaction of the gopīs to the same instruction that will follow in the next section.*

Book X, Chapter 23

1. The gopas said: "Balarāma, mighty-armed Balarāma! The

annihilator of the wicked! Our hunger is really troubling us; please

satisfy it."

2. Śrī Śuka said: "Bhagavān, the son of Devakī, was feeling pleased with His devotees, the wives of the brāhmaṇas. When He was appealed to in this way, He spoke as follows: 3. 'Go to the sacri cial

arena. Desiring to attain svarga [the celestial abode of the gods], the brāhmaṇa reciters of the Vedas are taking part in a sacri ce called āṅgirasa.

4. Go there and request some cooked rice, mentioning the names of

the worthy Bhagavān Balarāma, and of Me Myself; say that you have been dispatched by Us.'

5. Directed thus by Bhagavān, the boys went and asked as suggested.

They fell on the ground before the brāhmaṇas like sticks, 35 their hands cupped in supplication: 6. 'You are celestials on earth, please

listen. May good fortune be with you. Please know that we gopas have been dispatched by Balarāma and come to you to execute

Kṛṣṇa's instructions.

7. Balarāma and Acyuta have become hungry while grazing the

cows not far from here, and desire cooked rice from you. You are

distinguished in the knowledge of dharma, and if you have any respect for them, give them cooked rice. They entreat you, O

brāhmaṇas.

8. The eating of food, even from a person who has been consecrated

for the performance of sacri ce, is not de ling, O most noble ones,

the exception being during the consecration ceremony, the slaughter

of the sacri cial animal, and the sautrāmaṇi sacri ce.'36

9. Although they heard Bhagavān's request, the brāhmaṇas did not listen to it. They had petty aspirations. They thought themselves distinguished, but despite the fact that they performed numerous rituals, they were ignorant.

10.–11. Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān, Adhokṣaja, the Supreme Brahman in person. The place, time, sundry utensils, mantras, Tantra rituals, ṛtvik priests, res, gods, sacri cer, o ering, and the results accrued

[from the sacri ce] are constituted by Him. But the brāhmaṇas'

intelligence was perverted; thinking their bodies to be their real selves, they did not show Him courtesy, perceiving Him to be a mortal.

12. When they did not respond with either a 'yes' or a 'no,' the gopas returned dejected and reported what had happened to Kṛṣṇa and

Balarāma, O scorcher of enemies.

13. After listening to this, Bhagavān, the Lord of the Universe, laughed, pointing out the materialistic ways of the world. He then

spoke again to the gopas: 14. 'Inform the wives that I have arrived,

along with Saṅkarṣana [Balarāma]. They will give you as much food as you wish. They are a ectionate, and their minds dwell in Me.'

15. So, the gopas went to the patnīśālā [women's quarter], 37 where they saw them sitting down, prettily bedecked. They humbly paid homage to the wives of the brāhmaṇas and spoke as follows: 16.

'Greetings to you, O wives of brāhmaṇas; please listen to what we have to say. We have been sent by Kṛṣṇa, who is passing by not far

from here.

17. He has come from afar, and has been grazing the cows with Balarāma and the gopas. Please give food to him. He and his companions desire to eat.'

18. The women had always been eager for a glimpse of Acyuta,

because they had been captivated by accounts of Him. When they

heard that He had arrived nearby, they became ustered.

19. Taking along a great variety of the four types of food38 in pots, they surged forth to meet their beloved, like rivers to an ocean.

20. [Although] they were obstructed by their husbands, brothers, relatives, and sons, their hopes [of meeting Kṛṣṇa] had long been sustained by hearing about Him. He is Bhagavān, who is praised in the best of hymns.

21. The women saw Kṛṣṇa surrounded by the gopas and wandering

about with His elder brother in the grove on the Yamunā, which was a picturesque sight with fresh buds of aśoka trees.

22. He was dark blue in color, and wearing a golden garment. He

was dressed like an actor with fresh shoots, minerals, a peacock feather, and a forest garland. One hand was placed on the shoulder

of a companion, the other was twirling a lotus ower. His smiling

lotus face had curls on the cheeks and lotuses behind the ears.

23. The women had heard so much about their beloved, and His

celebrity had so lled their ears, that their minds had become

absorbed in Him. Now, they drew Him into [their hearts] through

the openings of their eyes. They embraced Him for a long time, and

cast o their distress, just like false notions of the self are cast o after wisdom is embraced.

24. Kṛṣṇa is the seer who discerns everything, and so understood that they had arrived in this fashion, giving up all false aspirations

out of a desire to see Him. He spoke to them, smiling.

25. 'Welcome. You are very fortunate women! Please be seated.

What can I do for you? You have come desiring to see Us, which is

certainly worthy of you.

26. There is no doubt that those who are learned and who

understand their self-interest engage in sel ess, uninterrupted bhakti to Me, because I am the one who is dear to their souls.

27. The vital airs, intelligence, mind, body, wife, children, wealth,

and other worldly assets become dear because of contact [with Me].

Therefore, what else is there that is dear in actuality?

28. So, go to the sacri cial arena. Your brāhmaṇa husbands are householders, and can only complete their sacri ce with your

participation.'39

29. The wives replied: 'You should not speak to us in such a cruel

fashion, O lord! Abide by your own doctrine!40 We have transgressed against all our relatives and have arrived at your lotus

feet to wear on our hair the tulasī garland discarded by your feet.

30. Our husbands, parents, sons, brothers, relatives, and friends, not

to speak of others, will not accept us. We are souls who have fallen

down at your lotus feet, so there can be no other destination for us.

Therefore, grant [us your shelter].'

31. Śrī Bhagavān said: 'Neither your husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, nor other relatives, nor people in general, will be angry with

you. Even the gods will approve, as they take shelter of Me.

32. Physical contact between people in this world does not

[produce] joy or a ection. Therefore, x your mind on Me, and you

will obtain Me without delay.’”

33. Śrī Śuka said: “When they had been addressed in this way, the wives of the brāhmaṇas returned to the sacri cial enclosure. The

[brāhmaṇas] were not displeased with them and completed the sacri ce with their wives.

34. One woman there, who had been impeded by her husband,

embraced Bhagavān in her heart as she conceived of Him from what she had heard—and gave up her body, the product of karma.

35. So Bhagavān, Govinda, the Lord, fed the gopas with the four kinds of foodstu s, and then He himself ate.

36. Imitating the world of men in a human body for the purpose of

līlā, He brought pleasure to the cows, gopas, and gopīs through His deeds, words, and beauty.

37. Later, those brāhmaṇas repented in retrospect: ‘We have committed an o ense because we ignored the request of the two

Lords of the universe. They are playing the role of mortals.’

38. Seeing the supreme devotion of the women to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa,

they lamented their own lack of it, and rebuked themselves: 39.

‘Curses on that birth which is threefold, [41] curses on vows, curses on extensive learning, curses on our family lineage, curses on skill in

rituals: we still remain averse to Adhokṣaja [Kṛṣṇa].

40. Truly, the māyā of Bhagavān bewilders even the yogīs. Because of it, we brāhmaṇas, the gurus of humanity, are confused about our own self-interest.

41. Aho! See the unlimited devotion of these very women to Kṛṣṇa, the Guru of the world. It has pierced the fetters of death under the guise of household life.

42. Neither the saṁskāra puri catory rites of the twice-born, 42 nor residence in the house of the guru, nor austerity, nor inquiry into the self, nor rites of cleanliness, nor auspicious rituals were [practiced]

by these women.

43. Nonetheless, they were constant in devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the Lord

of the lords of yoga, whose glories are renowned. This was not the

case with us, even though we have undergone the saṁskāras and other such rites.

44. Aho! Through the words of the gopas, Kṛṣṇa reminded us about the path of the virtuous, but we were deluded about our self-interest

and heedless because of our domestic activities.

45. Otherwise, what was the purpose of this playacting with us by

the Lord, the controller who grants blessings such as that of

liberation? His own desires are ful lled, but we are meant to be controlled [by Him].

46. His begging [for food] bewilders people, since the Goddess of Fortune, spurning others and relinquishing the faults of Her own nature, 43 worships Him constantly with the desire to touch His feet.

47. The place, time, sundry utensils, mantras, Tantra rituals, ṛtvik priests, res, gods, sacri cer, o ering, and the results accrued [from

the sacri ce], are constituted by Him.

48. He indeed is Bhagavān Himself, Viṣṇu, the Lord of the lords of yoga, born among the Yadus. Although we had heard this, being fools, we did not understand.

49. Aho! How fortunate we are to have wives such as these! Their devoutness has given rise to unwavering devotion to Hari in us.

50. Homage to Him, Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa, whose intelligence is ever fresh. We are wandering on the path of karma, our intelligence bewildered by His māyā.

51. He is the primeval person and so should graciously forgive our

o ense. Our minds are confused by His māyā and we are ignorant of His might.'

52. Re ecting on their o ense in this way, the [brāhmaṇas], who had been contemptuous of Kṛṣṇa, desired to see Vraj; but they did

not go, out of fear of Kaṁsa."

The Description of the Rāsa Pastime Bhāva Blueprint *The following passages constitute the pañcādhyāya (ve chapters). More has probably been written about these, and the madhura bhāva they express, in the secondary literature of the Kṛṣṇa traditions that emerged in the sixteenth century than about all the other chapters and bhāvas of the Bhāgavata put together.*

They are also the most easily misunderstood theologically. We will be brief in our comments but can note that so intense is the gopīs' determination to be with Kṛṣṇa that in order to remain with Him, they reject Kṛṣṇa's direct instruction to return home to perform their dharmas— in contrast with the wives of the brāhmaṇas in the previous section. Just as, in the Abrahamic tradition, God tests Abraham to see if he will obey Him even by the performance of an abhorrent deed—the killing of his own son, Isaac—so the gopīs' devotion informs us that there is a higher principle than mere dharma . By ignoring their husbands, children, and other duties and risking social ruination by openly going to the forest at night to be with Kṛṣṇa without even giving a thought to the possible repercussions, the gopīs demonstrate that love of God trumps all social, cultural, or any other mundane

considerations. Hence they are considered the greatest of all bhaktas. Thus the illiterate females born in a cowherding caste are the greatest of all yogīs in the Bhāgavata, thereby trumping the brāhmaṇa male dominance of normative Vedic culture. Once again, the text points to bhakti as transcendent to caste, gender, social status, and any and all other material considerations.

Book X, Chapter 29

1. Śrī Śuka, the son of Bādarāyaṇa, said: "Even Bhagavān, God Himself, beholding those nights, with autumnal jasmine [mallikā]

owers blossoming, called upon His divine power of yogamāyā, and

turned His thoughts toward enjoying love.

2. At that time, the moon, king of the constellations, arose in the east, covering the face of the heavens with its copper-colored

soothing rays. It wiped away the cares of the onlookers, like a lover

who has been absent for a long time wipes away the cares of his beloved.

3. Seeing that full disk, herald of the white night-lilies, reddened with fresh vermilion powder, its splendor like the face of Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Fortune, and seeing the forest colored by its silky rays, Kṛṣṇa played [His ute] softly, capturing the hearts of the beautiful-eyed women.

4. The music aroused Kāma.44 When they heard it, the women of Vraj, enchanted by Kṛṣṇa, came to their lover, their earrings

swinging in their haste, and unknown to one another.

5. Some, who were milking cows, abandoned the milking and approached eagerly. Others had put milk on the re, but then came

without even removing [the milk or] the cakes [from the oven].

6.–7. Others interrupted serving food, feeding their babies milk, and

attending to their husbands. Still others were eating but left their food. Others were putting on makeup, washing, or applying mascara

to their eyes. They all went to be near Kṛṣṇa, their clothes and ornaments in disarray.

8. Their hearts had been stolen by Govinda, so they did not turn back when husbands, fathers, brothers, and relatives tried to prevent

them. They were in a state of rapture.

9. Some gopīs, not being able to nd a way to leave, remained at home and thought of Kṛṣṇa with eyes closed, completely absorbed

in meditation.

10.–11. [The karma] from their impious deeds was destroyed by the intense and intolerable pain of separation from their lover, and their

auspicious deeds were diminished by the complete ful llment

resulting from the intimate contact with Acyuta that they obtained

through meditation.45 Their bondage was destroyed, and they immediately left their bodies made of the guṇas. 46 Uniting with the Supreme Soul, they considered Him their lover."

12. Śrī Parīkṣit said: "O sage, they related to Kṛṣṇa as their supreme lover, not as Brahman, the Absolute Truth. So how did the ow of the guṇas, in which their minds were absorbed, cease for the gopīs?"

13. Śrī Śuka said: "This was explained to you previously: in the same way as the king of the Cedis, Śiśupāla, attained perfection despite

hating Hṛṣīkeśa. 47 What, then, of those dear to Adhokṣaja [Kṛṣṇa]?

14. God appears for the supreme good of humanity, O king. He is

immeasurable and eternal. As the controller of the guṇas, He is beyond the guṇas.

15. Those who always dedicate their desire, anger, fear, a ection, sense of identity, and friendship to Hari enter for certain into His

state of being.

16. You should not show such surprise at Lord Kṛṣṇa. He is unborn

and the master of all masters of yoga. From Him the whole universe attains liberation.

17. The Lord saw that the women of Vraj had arrived in His

presence. Being the best of speakers, He addressed them, captivating

them with the charm of His words: 18. 'Welcome—you are most

fortunate. What can I do to please you? Is everything well in Vraj?

Tell me the purpose of your coming.

19. This fearsome dark night is frequented by ferocious creatures.

Go back to Vraj, O slender-waisted ones; this place is not t for women.

20. Your mothers, fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands are worried

because they cannot nd you. Do not cause your relatives concern.

21.–22. You have seen the forest, adorned with owers, colored by

the rays of the full moon, and made beautiful by the blossoms of the

trees quivering playfully in the breeze of the Yamunā river.

Therefore hurry now to the cowpen and serve your husbands—you

are chaste ladies. The babies and calves are crying; suckle them and

milk them.

23. Or perhaps your hearts are captivated, and you have come out

of love for Me. This is commendable of you—living beings delight in

Me.

24. The highest dharma [duty] of a woman is to serve her husband faithfully, to ensure the well-being of her relatives, and to nourish

her children.

25. A husband who is not a sinner, even though he be of bad character, illfated, old, dull-headed, sick, or poor, should not be abandoned by women who desire to attain heaven.

26. Without exception, the adultery of a woman of good birth does

not lead to heaven. It is scandalous, fear-laden, worthless, fraught with di culty, and abhorrent.

27. Love for Me comes from hearing about Me, seeing Me, meditating on Me and reciting My glories—not in this way, by

physical proximity. Therefore, return to your homes.'

28. Hearing Govinda speak these unwelcome words, the dejected

gopīs had their aspirations dashed and were inconsolable in their distress.

29. They stood silently, their red bimba fruit–colored lips faded by their sighs, and the vermilion powder on their breasts smeared by

the mascara carried by their tears. Casting down their faces out of

sorrow and scratching the ground with their feet, they were

weighed down by extreme unhappiness.

30. Wiping their eyes, and having checked their tears somewhat, the

gopīs spoke to Kṛṣṇa, their beloved, with voices faltering with agitation. They were utterly devoted, and had sacri ced all desires

for His sake, but He had replied to them as if He were anything but

their beloved: 31. 'You should not speak to us in such a heartless fashion, O Lord. Renouncing all enjoyments of the senses, we are devoted to the soles of Your feet. Reciprocate, you obstinate one, just as the Lord, the original being, reciprocates with those who desire liberation. Do not reject us.

32. You, the knower of dharma, have declared that the occupational dharma of women consists of attending to friends, husbands, and children. Then let this be our dharma when it comes to You, the source of this advice, O Lord—after all, You are the soul within all relatives. Indeed, You are the most dear of all embodied beings.

33. You are the eternal beloved, O soul of all, and so the learned

place their a ection in You. What is the use of husbands and

children who simply cause problems? Therefore, O Supreme Lord,

be pleased with us. Do not dash our hopes. They have been

sustained by You for such a long time, O lotus-eyed one.

34. Our hearts, which were absorbed in our households, have been

stolen away with ease by You, as have our hands from domestic

chores. Our feet cannot move one step from the soles of Your lotus feet. How can we go to Vraj? And besides, what would we do there?

35. O beloved, pour the nectar of your lips on the re dwelling in

our hearts, which has been kindled by Your musical harmonies,

Your glances, and Your smiles. If you do not, we will traverse the

path to Your feet through meditation, our bodies consumed by the

re born of separation.

36. Lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, You are dear to the forest-dwelling hermits.

Somewhere or other, for a moment, we providentially touched the

soles of Your feet, which belong to the Goddess of Fortune. Alas, from that moment, instantly enamored of You, we became incapable

of remaining in the presence of any other man.

37. The Goddess of Fortune aspires to the dust of those lotus feet,

which is worshipped by Your servants, even though She has

obtained a place on Your chest along with Tulasī. 48 Other gods, even, strive to attract Her personal glance. In the same way, we solicit the dust of Your feet.

38. It is You who banish distress—therefore be compassionate to us.

In the desire to worship You, we have given up our homes and arrived at the soles of Your feet. Allow us, whose hearts are burning

with intense desire born from Your beautiful smiles and glances, to

be Your servants, O ornament of men.

39. We have gazed on Your face covered with curls, with its smiles

and glances, and on Your honeyed lips placed between Your cheeks

made beautiful with earrings. And we have beheld Your two strong

arms, which bestow fearlessness, and Your chest, which is the

exclusive delight of the Goddess of Fortune. After this we have become Your servants.

40. Dear Kṛṣṇa, what women in the three worlds would not stray from the behavior proper to Āryans, when thrown into turmoil by

the melodies of Your ute, which vibrates harmoniously? And what

woman would not stray after seeing this, Your form, which brings

good fortune to the three worlds and causes the hair of cows, birds, trees, and deer to stand on end with bliss?

41. It is clear that You have accepted birth to remove the

tribulations and fears of Vraj just as the Lord, the primeval person,

protects the denizens of heaven. Therefore, since You are the friend

of the a icted, place Your lotus hands on the burning breasts and

heads of Your servants.'"

42. Śrī Śuka said: "The Master of the masters of yoga, hearing their despairing words, laughed and engaged in amorous pleasures with

them from kindness, even though His satisfaction is self-contained.

43. Kṛṣṇa, the infallible one, whose conduct is upright, shone forth

with the assembled gopīs, who were dazzling with jasmine teeth and broad smiles. As the gopīs' faces blossomed from the glances of their beloved, Kṛṣṇa appeared like the moon surrounded by stars.

44. Praised in song, and singing loudly Himself, the Lord of

hundreds of women, wearing a garland of vaijayantī owers, frolicked in the forest, making it beautiful.

45.–46. Accompanied by the gopīs, Kṛṣṇa approached the bank of the river. Its cool sand was swept by a wind bearing the scent of kumuda owers and refreshing from its contact with the waves.

Arousing kāma in the young women of Vraj with jokes, smiles, and glances, playfully scratching their breasts, girdles, thighs, hair, and

hands with His nails, and embracing them with outstretched arms,

He gave them pleasure.

47. Such attention from Kṛṣṇa, Bhagavān, the Supreme Soul, made

the gopīs proud. Indeed, they thought themselves to be the best of women on earth.

48. Keśava saw their pride, which was born from the exhilaration of

their good fortune, and vanished from the spot out of kindness, in

order to moderate [their pride].”

Searching for Kṛṣṇa in the Rāsa Pastime Bhāva Blueprint *This passage contains a good example of viraha bhakti , love in separation from the beloved. The Gauḍīya tradition considers this form of love to be even more intense than that of union with the beloved. In their ramblings to the trees and plants, we gain some sense of the extent of the gopīs’ devotional madness when Kṛṣṇa disappears from their midst. Their absorption in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa is revealed in the fact that everything reminds them of their departed beloved, in their reenactment of His līlās among themselves and in their obsessive conviction that Kṛṣṇa has gone o with someone else. The divine intoxication of the gopīs is not paralleled by any other bhakta in the text, thus again underscoring their devotional preeminence in the Bhāgavata.*

Book X, Chapter 30

1. Śrī Śuka said: “When Bhagavān suddenly vanished, the women of Vraj were lled with remorse at His disappearance. They were like

female elephants who had lost sight of the leader of the herd.

2. Intoxicated by the pleasing gestures, playfulness, and words, as well as by the quivering glances, smiles of love, and movements of

Kṛṣṇa, the husband of Ramā, the Goddess of Fortune, their minds were overwhelmed. They acted out each of those behaviors, their hearts [dedicated] to Him.

3. Those beloved women were so bewildered by Kṛṣṇa's pastimes

that their bodies imitated their darling in the way they moved, smiled, glanced, spoke, and so forth. With their hearts [dedicated]

to Him, the women declared: 'I am He!'

4. Singing loudly in unison only about Him, they searched from grove to grove, like madwomen. They asked the trees about the

Supreme Being who, like space, is inside and outside living

creatures: 5. 'O aśvattha tree! O plakṣa tree! O nyagrodha tree! Have you seen the son of Nanda at all? He has stolen our minds with his

glances and smiles of love, and has gone.

6. O kurabaka, aśoka, nāga, punnāga, and campaka trees! Has the younger brother of Balarāma [passed] by here? His smile steals

away the pride of haughty women.

7. O auspicious tulasī plant, you who are dear to Govinda! Have you seen your most beloved, Acyuta, wearing you [as a garland covered]

with swarms of bees?

8. O mālatī plant! O mallikā plant! O jātī plant! O yūthikā plant! Has Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa] passed by, awakening your love with the touch of

his hand? Have you seen him?

9. O cūta [mango], priyāla, panasa [breadfruit], asana, kovidāra, jambū [rose-apple], arka, bilva [wood-apple], bakula, āmra [mango], kadamba, and nīpa trees, and those others which grow on the shore of the Yamunā river and which exist to bene t others! Point us to the path [taken] by Kṛṣṇa. We have lost our hearts.

10. O earth, you are beautiful in that the hairs of your body [the

trees] stand up from the bliss of the touch of the feet of Keśava

[Kṛṣṇa]. What ascetic practice have you performed? Is the cause of

this these very feet [of Kṛṣṇa]? Or is it because of the step of Urukrama? [49] Or rather from the embrace of the body of Varāha?50

11. O wife of the deer, has Acyuta passed by here with his beloved,

his limbs giving pleasure to your eyes? O friend, the scent from the

jasmine garland of the lord of our group is wafting here—a garland

colored with breast sa ron contracted from the body of his lover.

12. O trees, did the younger brother of Balarāma wander here? Was

he followed by swarms of bees, blinded with intoxication, on his tulasī [garland]? With his arm placed on the shoulder of his beloved, he [must have been] holding a lotus ower. And did he

acknowledge with glances of love your bowing down?

13. Ask these creeping plants! Just see, although they are embracing

the arms of the forest tree, they surely must have been touched by

his ngernails, for they are bristling with ecstasy.'

14. The gopīs, [uttering] these crazed words, became perplexed in their search for Kṛṣṇa. With their hearts [dedicated] to Him, each of

them imitated the līlā of Bhagavān.

15. One, who was acting as if she were Kṛṣṇa, suckled the breast of

someone else, who was playing the part of Pūtanā. 51 Another

became an infant, began crying, and then kicked another one, who was acting as a cart, with her foot.

16. After changing into a demon, one gopī kidnapped another, who was imagining herself to be the child Kṛṣṇa. Yet another crawled around, dragging her two feet, accompanied by the sounds from her

jewelry.

17. Two gopīs enacted the roles of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and others behaved as gopas. Yet another struck a gopī who had become Vatsa, the calf demon, while someone else there struck the gopī who was playing the role of Baka, the crane demon.

18. One called the cows who were far away, as Kṛṣṇa would have

done. Others praised one gopī who was sporting and playing the ute in imitation of him: 'Bravo!'

19. Another, wandering about, placed her arm on someone else and

said: 'There can be no doubt that I am Kṛṣṇa. Look at how gracefully

I move.' Her mind was intent on him: 20. 'Do not fear the wind and

the rain. I have arranged protection.' Saying this, one gopī, exerting herself, lifted up her garment with one hand.

21. Another gopī mounted and stepped on the head of another with her foot, O king, and said: 'Go, wicked snake! There is no doubt that

I have undertaken birth as the chastiser of the wicked.'[52]

22. Someone there said: 'Hey, gopas, look at the terrible forest re!

Close your eyes, I will with ease arrange for your protection!'[53]

23. One slender-waisted gopī was tied to a mortar with a ower garland by another one. The former, her beautiful eyes afraid,

covered her face and adopted a posture of fear.

24. Inquiring thus after Kṛṣṇa from the creeping plants and trees of

Vṛndāvana, the gopīs noticed the footprints of the Supreme Soul in a certain part of the forest: 25. 'These footprints are certainly those of the great soul, the son of Nanda,' they said. 'They are recognizable

from such marks as the ag, the lotus ower, the thunderbolt, the

goad, and the barley.'[54]

26. Following Kṛṣṇa's tracks farther, footprint by footprint, the women noticed that they were clearly interspersed with the

footprints of a young woman. They discussed this together in

distress: 27. 'Whose footprints are these? She is going with the son

of Nanda, his forearm placed on her shoulder, like a female elephant

with a male elephant.

28. She has worshipped[55] *Bhagavān Hari, the Lord. Consequently, Govinda was pleased, and so has abandoned us and led that gopī to a secluded place.*

29. Just see, O friends, how fortunate are these particles of dust from the lotus feet of Govinda. Brahmā, Śiva, and the Goddess of Fortune, Ramā (Śrī), place them on their heads to remove their sins.

30. The footprints of that woman are causing us great distress because she alone of the gopīs is enjoying the lips of Acyuta in a secluded place.

31. Now, right here, her footprints are no longer visible: the lover

has lifted up his beloved, whose feet with their delicate soles are bruised by the blades of grass.

31a. 56 Look, gopīs, at these deeper footprints of lusty Kṛṣṇa weighed down by carrying the young woman. And here the beloved has been

put down by that great soul in order to [gather] owers.

32. Look, here the lover plucked owers for the beloved: these two

footprints are incomplete because he stood on tiptoe.

33. Here, lusty Kṛṣṇa decorated that lusty woman's hair. Surely he

sat here while making his lover a crown with those [owers].'"

34. [Śrī Śuka said]: "Kṛṣṇa took pleasure with that gopī, although He is complete, content within Himself, and delights in His own self. He

was displaying the wretchedness of lusty men and women because

of their depravity.

35.–36. The dispirited gopīs wandered about pointing [things] out in this way. The gopī, whom Kṛṣṇa had taken to the forest after abandoning the other women, then thought that she was the best of

all women: 'Kṛṣṇa, my beloved, has abandoned the [other] gopīs who were impelled by Kāma and dedicated himself to me.'

37. Then, after going to a spot in the wood, the proud woman spoke

to Keśava [Kṛṣṇa]: 'I am unable to walk any farther. Take me

wherever your mind [desires].'

38. At this request, Kṛṣṇa told His beloved that she should climb on

His shoulder, but then He disappeared. The young woman was lled

with remorse: 39. ‘O Lord, lover, dearest! Where are you? Where are

you, mighty-armed one? Reveal your presence to me, friend—I am

your miserable servant!’”

40. Śrī Śuka said: “The gopīs, searching for the path of Bhagavān, saw a distressed girl not far away who was disorientated by the separation from her beloved.

41. Hearing her story of how she had rst received respect from Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa], and then humiliation because of her bad faith, they were astounded.

42. After this, they went as far into the forest as the moon gave light. Then, seeing that darkness had descended there, the women

returned.

43. Their minds absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, the gopīs’ conversations focused on Him, their activities centered on Him, and they dedicated their

hearts to Him. Simply by singing about His qualities, they forgot their own homes.

44. Meditating on Kṛṣṇa, they reached the bank of the Kālindī

[Yamunā] river again. Gathering together they sang about Kṛṣṇa, longing for His arrival.”

The Gopīs’ Song in the Rāsa Pastime Bhāva Blueprint *The gopīs’ love-induced pining for Kṛṣṇa in madhura bhāva continues.*

Book X, Chapter 31

1. The gopīs said: “Vraj has become preeminent because of your birth; indeed, Indirā [Lakṣmī] resides there permanently. O loved

one, show yourself! Your devotees, whose lives are sustained in you, are searching for you everywhere.

2. You are taking our life, O lord of autumn; your glance excels in

beauty the heart of a beautiful lotus perfectly born in autumn from

a pool of water. We are your maidservants [and do not ask for] any

payment. Isn’t this killing us, O bestower of favors?

3. O bull among men, we have been continuously protected by you

from destruction from the poisonous water, from the wicked demon,

from the winds and rains, from re and lightning, from the bull Ariṣṭa, from the son of Maya (Vyomāsura), and from fear from all

sides.57

4. You are not, in fact, the son of a gopī. You are the witness of the inner self of all embodied beings. Being petitioned by Brahmā, You

become manifest in the family of the Sātvatas, O friend, for the protection of the universe.

5. Place Your lotus hand on the head of those who have approached

You out of fear of the material world, O foremost of the Vṛṣṇi clan.

Your hand, which holds the hand of Śrī [Lakṣmī], bestows

fearlessness and ful lls desires, O lover.

6. You are the hero of women, and you take away the pain of the

people of Vraj! The pride of your devotees is annihilated by your smile! Accept your maidservants, friend! Show us your beautiful

lotus face!

7. Place your lotus feet upon our breasts. Your feet have been placed

on the hoods of the serpent [Kāliya] and follow the animals to the

pasture. They are the abode of the Goddess of Fortune, Śrī, and they

remove the sins of submissive embodied beings. Excise Kāma, who

dwells within our hearts.

8. O hero, these women obedient to your will are stunned by your

sweet voice, your charming words which please the mind and

intelligence, and your lotus eyes. Reinvigorate us with the

intoxicating liquid of your lips.

9. Those who repeat the sweetness of your words in this world are muni cent. These words are praised by poets, spread abroad, and are auspicious to hear. They are life-giving for those who are su ering. They remove sins and bring good fortune.

10. Your bursts of laughter, pleasing looks of love, and pastimes are

auspicious to contemplate. Those meetings in secret places touch our hearts, you cheater, and perturb us thoroughly.

11. When you go from Vraj grazing the animals, O lord, your feet,

beautiful as lotuses, are troubled by blades of grass and corn stubble, and so we feel distress. You are our beloved.

12. You possess a lotus face, surrounded by blue locks of hair, which

you constantly display covered with thick dust at the end of the day.

You arouse Kāma in the heart, O hero.

13. O lover, place your most bene cent lotus feet on our breasts.

They ful ll the desires of the humble and should be meditated upon

in trouble, O destroyer of anxiety. They are worshipped by the lotus-born Brahmā, and are the ornament of the earth.

14. Bestow upon us the nectar of your lips, O hero, which have been

thoroughly kissed by the ute as it plays music. It destroys sorrow,

increases the pleasures of love, and causes men to forget other passions.

15. When you, Lord, go to the forest during the day, a moment becomes an aeon (yuga) for those who do not see you. He who created eyelashes is dull-witted, from the perspective of those

beholding your beautiful face, with its curled locks of hair. [58]

16. Acyuta, you are the knower of [people's] movements.

Bewildered by your song, we have thoroughly neglected our

husbands, sons, family, brothers, and kinsfolk, and come before you.

Who would abandon women in the night, you rogue?

17. We have become unsettled from contemplating your broad

chest, the abode of Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune, as well as your looks

of love, your smiling face, and the meetings in secret places which aroused Kāma. We long for you intensely all the time.

18. Your incarnation is for the good of the universe, and dispels the

distress of the people of Vraj. Deliver a little of that [medicine]

which removes the ailment from the hearts of your devotees to us.

Our hearts yearn for you.

19. We gently place your tender lotus feet on our rough breasts with

trepidation. You wander in the forest on them and our minds are disturbed: What if they have been hurt by small stones? Your

Lordship is our life."

The Gopīs' Lamentation in the Rāsa Pastime Bhāva Blueprint *After intensifying their love for Him by His absence, Kṛṣṇa reappears to satisfy His beloved gopīs . The passage ends with even God Himself stating that He has no way to reciprocate with the extremes of their love for Him.*

Book X, Chapter 32

1. Śrī Śuka said: "Thus, the gopīs sang and spoke incoherently in various ways. Longing to see Kṛṣṇa, O king, they wept loudly.

2. Kṛṣṇa, the descendant of Sūra, bewilderer of the mind of the mind-bewilderer Kāma himself, appeared in their midst, His lotus face smiling. He was wearing garments and bore a garland.

3. Seeing that their beloved had returned, the women, their eyes wide with love, sprang up simultaneously, as if the vital air of the

body had returned.

4. One ecstatic woman caught hold of Kṛṣṇa's lotus hand in her folded hands. Another placed His arm, decorated with sandalwood

paste, on her shoulder.

5. A slender woman accepted His chewed betel nut with folded

hands. Another, burning [with desire], placed His lotus feet on her breast.

6. Yet another, trembling with the fury of love, was biting her lips with her teeth, her brows knitted in a frown. She glared at Kṛṣṇa as if she could strike Him with a look of rebuke.

7. Another woman dwelled on His lotus face with unblinking eyes. Although she drank it in with her eyes, she was not fully satis ed, just as a saint is not fully satis ed [by meditating on] Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

8. Some other woman, drawing Kṛṣṇa into her heart through the apertures of her eyes and then sealing them shut, stood embracing Him [in her heart], like a yogī immersed in bliss. 59

9. All rejoiced at the wonder of seeing Keśava [Kṛṣṇa], and let go the distress they had felt at separation, just as people are joyful after encountering a wise man.

10. Bhagavān, Acyuta, surrounded by the women who had shaken o their sorrow, shone brilliantly, like the Supreme Being surrounded by His śakti powers.

11.–12. The Supreme Ruler took the women along and enjoyed Himself on the auspicious bank of the Kālindī [Yamunā]. There were bees with six legs and a breeze fragrant with blossoming jasmine and mandāra owers. Its soft sands were lapped by waves that were like the hands of the

Kṛṣṇa [Yamunā] river. The darkness of the night was dispelled by the full rays from the autumn moon.

13. The heartache of the gopīs had been assuaged by the bliss of seeing Kṛṣṇa, just as the Vedas attained the culmination of their hearts' desire. 60 The gopīs made a seat for the friend of their heart with their outer garments, which were smeared with the kuṅkuma powder from their breasts.

14. Bhagavān, the Lord, whose seat is xed within the hearts of the masters of yoga, sat down there. He was worshipped as He sat in the company of the gopīs, and revealed Himself in a form that was a unique embodiment of beauty in the three worlds.

15. Those women worshipped that inciter of Kāma by massaging His

hands and feet, which they had placed on their laps. They praised

Him, their eyebrows quivering, with playful looks and laughter.

Then they spoke, somewhat angrily.

16. The beautiful gopīs said: 'Some serve those who serve them.

Some do the opposite of this [that is, serve those who do not serve

them]. And some do not serve either. Can you explain this for us clearly?'

17. Śrī Bhagavān said: 'Friends, there are those who serve each other reciprocally, but their exchange is exclusively out of self-interest; there is no dharma or friendship there. Personal gain and nothing else is the motive.

18. Those, like mothers and fathers, who serve those who do not serve [them] are truly compassionate. There is perfect friendship and dharma in this, O slender-waisted ones.

19. Some do not serve even those who serve [them], let alone those

who do not serve [them]. They include those who take pleasure in

their spiritual self, those whose desires are ful lled, the ungrateful

and the guru haters.

20. I do not serve even those beings who serve Me so as to enhance

their devotional state of mind, O friends. The case is like that of the

poor man who is not conscious of anything else when the wealth that he had gained is lost, but continues to contemplate that wealth

obsessively.

21. In this way, O women, when I disappeared from your presence

—you who had abandoned relatives, the [injunctions of the] Vedas,

and the world for My sake—it was really to further [your

dedication] to Me. I was serving you. Therefore, beloved ones, you

should not be displeased with your beloved.

22. You have broken the enduring shackles of the household, and have served me. You are full of goodness and without fault, and I

am unable to reciprocate, even in the lifetime of a celestial.

Therefore, let your reward be your own excellence.'"

The Description of the Rāsa 61 Pastime Bhāva Blueprint *The rāsa dance between Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs is the most famous episode in Kṛṣṇa literature as evidenced in Indian art, poetry, drama, and other cultural expressions. The passage ends with Parīkṣit asking the question most commonly raised about Kṛṣṇa from here in the text itself to colonial and missionary critiques of the tradition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: How can Kṛṣṇa, who is the propagator and exemplar of dharma , possibly transgress His own codes by cavorting with the wives of others? Śuka begins his answer, expectedly, with pointing out that Kṛṣṇa is the transcendent Godhead and*

not subject to mundane notions of dharma. But he continues with the more important bhāva- related answer: Kṛṣṇa, although self-ful lled, satis es His bhaktas according to their desires to be with Him and this trumps all mundane relationships and social considerations.

Although the Bhāgavata strongly and unambiguously stresses dharma throughout all of its other eighteen thousand verses, the theological message of this short section on madhura is that the highest stages of pure bhakti , love of God, transcends all material expectations and obligations, including that of dharma. Dharma is relevant only to the sphere of saṁsāra , and this section of the text is dedicated to the highest and ultimate goal of human existence—pure love of God exclusive of all and every other consideration. Hence it is considered the apex of Kṛṣṇa devotion.

Book X, Chapter 33

1. "Hearing the Lord's winning words spoken in this way, the gopīs

relinquished their distress at separation, but their aspirations

increased from touching His limbs.

2. Govinda [Kṛṣṇa] began the rāsa pastime there, in the company of those devoted jewels of women, who linked arms happily together.

3. The festival of the rāsa dance began, featuring a circle of gopīs.

The Lord of all yogīs, Kṛṣṇa, inserted Himself between each pair of gopīs, and put His arms about their necks. Each woman thought He was at her side only. Meanwhile, the sky was crowded with

hundreds of the vehicles of the celestials, who were accompanied by

their wives and carried away with excitement.

4. Kettledrums resounded then, streams of owers fell, and the

chiefs of the gandharvas and their wives sang of Kṛṣṇa's spotless glories.

5. There was a tumultuous sound of bracelets, ankle-bracelets, and

the bells of the young women in the circle of the rāsa dance with their beloved.

6. Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān, the son of Devakī, was radiant in their company, like a great emerald in the midst of golden ornaments.

7. The consorts of Kṛṣṇa, their braids and belts securely fastened, sang about Him with hand gestures and dancing feet. Their faces were sweating, their earrings rolling on their cheeks, and the

garments on their breasts slipping. Their waists were bent, and they

smiled, their eyebrows playful. They shone like lightning in a circle

of clouds.

8. They were intent on amorous pleasure and overjoyed by Kṛṣṇa's

touch. Their throats decorated with dye, they sang loudly as they danced, and the world reverberated with their songs.

9. One gopī led a duet in harmony with Mukunda. Kṛṣṇa was pleased and praised her: 'Well done! Well done!' Then she led the refrain and He heaped praises on her.

10. Another, tired by the rāsa dance, her mallikā [jasmine] owers and bracelets loosened, laid her arm on the shoulder of Kṛṣṇa, the

wielder of the club, who was standing by her side.

11. Kṛṣṇa placed His arm on the shoulder of one of the gopīs.

Smelling it, fragrant as a blue lotus and smeared with sandalwood,

she kissed it, the hairs of her body tingling with rapture.

12. Kṛṣṇa gave His chewed betel nut to another gopī as she placed her cheek, adorned with the glitter of earrings in disarray from the

dancing, next to His cheek.

13. Yet another gopī who was singing and dancing, her belt and ankle-bracelets jingling, became fatigued. She placed the soothing lotus hand of Acyuta, who was at her side, on her breast.

14. The gopīs won their lover Acyuta, who is the exclusive beloved of Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune. Their necks encircled by His arms,

they delighted in Him as they sang.

15. The gopīs, with glowing faces, cheeks adorned with locks of hair, and lotus owers behind their ears, were beautiful. They danced

with the Lord in the circle of the rāsa to the musical accompaniment of the bees complemented by the sound of their anklets and bangles.

Wreaths of owers fell from their hair.

16. Thus Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Lakṣmī,62 sported with the beautiful girls of Vraj with freely playful smiles, amorous glances, and with

caresses and embraces. He was like a child enraptured by His own

re ection.

17. The senses of the women of Vraj were alive with pleasure from

the contact of His limbs. Their ornaments and garlands were awry,

and the women could not keep their garments or their hair or the

cloth covering their breasts in order, O best of the Kuru dynasty.

18. The women of the celestial realm traveling in the air were stricken with desire at seeing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and became

entranced. The moon and its entourage [the stars] were full of wonder.

19. Although content within Himself, the Lord became manifest in

as many forms as there were gopī women, and enjoyed Himself with them in līlā pastimes.

20. With great compassion, Kṛṣṇa lovingly caressed with His very soothing hands the face of those gopīs who were exhausted from the pleasures of love.

21. The gopīs paid homage to their hero with sideways looks and honeyed smiles. Their beautiful cheeks glowed with locks of hair and the glitter of golden earrings. Thrilled by the touch of Kṛṣṇa's

ngernails, they sang of His auspicious deeds.

22. When he tired, Kṛṣṇa went into the water with them. He was pursued by bees, who [sang] like gandharva chiefs, because of his garland. Crushed by contact with the limbs of the gopīs, it was stained with the kuṅkuma powder from their breasts. Kṛṣṇa was like the king of the elephants who had lost all inhibitions with his female elephants.

23. With looks of love, the young women around Him laughed and

splashed Him vigorously, O king! Worshipped with showers of

kusuma owers by the celestial beings in their aerial chariots, Kṛṣṇa

disported Himself like an elephant in līlā pastimes, even though He is content within Himself.

24. Later, He strolled in the groves of the Yamunā river, surrounded by groups of young women and bees. The farthest corners of the river, both on land and on the waters, were pervaded by a wind bearing the fragrance of owers. He was like an elephant exhilarated by the company of His female elephants.

25. Kṛṣṇa's desires are always ful lled, and His propensity for enjoyment is ful lled within Himself, but during all those nights He

participated in this way in the company of throngs of young women.

Such nights, brilliant with the rays of the moon, are the setting for

rasa in both poetry and prose that describe autumn."

26. Parīkṣit said: "God, the Lord of the Universe, has descended into

the world along with His expansion [Balarāma] for the

establishment of dharma, and for the suppression of adharma, non-dharma. 63

27. He is the original speaker, exemplar, and protector of the injunctions of *dharma*. How could He behave in a manner contrary

to *dharma*, O *brāhmaṇa*, by touching the wives of others?

28. The Lord of the Yadu dynasty, who is content within Himself,

has performed an abhorrent deed. What was His purpose? You who

are true to your vows, please take away our doubt."

29. *Śrī* Śuka said: "Just as re consumes everything [without being polluted], so it is seen that the blatant transgressions of *dharma* by the more powerful of rulers are not faults.

30. One who is not a powerful being should certainly never behave

in that fashion, not even in his mind. Otherwise, acting out of foolishness, he will be destroyed; just as one who is not Śiva will be

destroyed [by drinking] the poison churned from the ocean. 64

31. The words of powerful beings are truth, and so is whatever is

performed by them. The wise will act in accordance with their

words.

32. O master, those who are devoid of personal ego do not accrue bene t for themselves through appropriate behavior, nor

undesirable results through its opposite.

33. What, then, of the applicability of auspiciousness and

inauspiciousness to the Supreme Being of all Supreme Beings and of

all living entities, whether celestial, human, or animal?

34. Satis ed by worshipping the dust of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, even the

sages act according to their own free will. The bondage of all their

karma has been destroyed through the power of *yoga*, and so they are never bound. How, then, can one speak of bondage for Kṛṣṇa,

who accepts forms according to His own will?

35. He lives within the *gopīs*, their husbands, and all living beings.

He is the supreme witness who has assumed a form in this world for

the purpose of sport.

36. Manifest in a human form, He indulges in such pastime as a favor to the devotees. Hearing about these, one becomes fully

devoted to Him.

37. Confused by His power of illusion, the menfolk of Vraj were not

resentful of Kṛṣṇa; each thought his own wife was present at his side.

38. The *gopīs* held the Lord dear. When the duration of Brahmā's night had expired, 65 they went home unwillingly with the approval of Vāsudeva.

39. The sober person who is endowed with faith should hear and describe these pastimes of Viṣṇu with the maidens of Vraj.

Achieving supreme devotion to the Lord, one quickly frees oneself

from lust, the disease of the heart."

The Vision of Kṛṣṇa *Bhāva* Blueprint *We conclude part 3 with this passage on Kṛṣṇa's ute.*

(We break the sequence of the chapters in the tenth book here.) While the narrative prioritizes the madhura bhāva *, we see here that the entire landscape of Vraj bristles with ecstasy merely from hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa's ute. The animals and plants noted here and in the previous passages experience an expression of* sānta bhāva *, which, as discussed in* "Rāga, Bhāva, *and* Rasa," *is a nonactive state of ecstatic absorption in Kṛṣṇa. In this regard, the passage points to the Vaiṣṇava understanding of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka as realms made of pure consciousness, where even the ora, fauna, and natural landscape are conscious beings immersed in an eternal, ecstatic state of rapture in communion with God in accordance with their respective* bhāvas .

Nothing is inanimate. This passage thus gives a glimpse at what constitutes the eternal postmortem Kingdom of God and ultimate goal of Kṛṣṇa devotion for the liberated bhaktas .

Book X, Chapter 21

1. Thus, Acyuta entered the [forest of Vṛndāvana] with the cows and cowherders. Its waters were clear because it was autumn, and it

was cooled by breezes bearing the pleasant scents of lotuses.

2. Kṛṣṇa, the chief of the Madhu dynasty, along with the

cowherding boys, penetrated deep into [the forest] while grazing the cows. Its mountains, rivers, and lakes reverberated with the sounds of ocks of birds and of restless bees in the owering trees.

Kṛṣṇa played His ute.

3. The women of Vraj heard that ute music—music which incites

Kāma. Some of them described Kṛṣṇa to their con dantes in private.

4. Remembering the activities of Kṛṣṇa, they began to describe

them, but their minds became so agitated with the power of Kāma

that they were unable [to continue], O king.

5. As his glories were being sung by the band of *gopas*, Kṛṣṇa entered the forest of Vṛndā, which was pleasantly transformed by

[the touch of] His feet. His form was that of a superb dancer. He wore a peacock feather head ornament, pericarps of lotus owers on

His ears, garments of a reddish-gold color, and a *vaijayantī* garland.

The nectar of His lips lled the holes of His ute.

6. The sound of the ute steals the minds of all living things, O king.

After hearing and describing it, the women of Vraj embraced each

other.

7. The beautiful *gopīs* said: “We do not know of any higher reward for those who have eyes than this [sight of] the faces of those two

sons of the chief of Vraj as they, with their companions, make the

animals follow them, O girlfriends. With their two utes their faces are enchanting, and they cast loving glances which are absorbed by

those [who have eyes].

8. Dressed in a variety of garments twined about with garlands of

lotuses, lilies, clusters of blossoms, peacock feathers, and mango tree

sprouts, they are unmistakable as they shine amid the assembly of

cowherders. They are like two actors sometimes singing on a stage.

9. O *gopīs*, what auspicious deed did this ute perform? It personally enjoys the *rasa* nectar from Dāmodara's [Kṛṣṇa's] lips—which should belong to the *gopīs*; whatever avor is left over is all that remains [for us]. The rivers manifest bliss through their surfaces, and the trees shed tears, just like noble Āryan people.

10. O girlfriends, Vṛndāvana, which has acquired the riches of the

lotus feet of the son of Devakī, is spreading the glories of the earth.

All other living beings are stunned after seeing the ecstatic peacocks

from the mountain ridges dance to Govinda's [Kṛṣṇa's] ute.

11. These female does are lucky, even though they are in an

ignorant birth. When they hear the ute playing of the beautifully

dressed son of Nanda, they, along with the spotted antelopes, o er

worship with glances of love.

12. Kṛṣṇa's nature and form are a delight for women—the celestial

women became captivated when they saw it and heard the

distinctive tunes played on his ute. The owers from their braids

dropped out, and the belts from their waists slipped o as they went

about on celestial air-vehicles, their hearts agitated by Kāma.

13. The cows, their ears pricked, were also drinking the nectar of the ute music coming from Kṛṣṇa's mouth. The calves stood

trans xed with their mouths full of milk from the dripping udders.

Shedding tears, in their hearts they caressed Govinda with their eyes.

14. It is a wonderful thing, O mother! In all probability, the birds in

this forest are sages. They y up to the branches of the trees that are

covered with sweet fresh leaves, and, with unblinking eyes, listen to the melodious tunes of the ute coming from Kṛṣṇa. They make no

other noise.

15. The rivers found their force disrupted by their state of mind after hearing the sound of Mukunda's ute, as could be seen from

their whirlpools. Bearing o erings of lotus owers, they grasped the

two lotus feet of Murāri [Kṛṣṇa] and embraced them closely with their arms in the form of waves.

16. The water-bearing cloud saw Kṛṣṇa playing the ute as He was

herding the animals of Vraj with Balarāma and the *gopas* in the heat.

Bursting with love, it ascended with streams of owers [in the form

of rain], and with its own body spread out a large umbrella for its

friend.

17. The *pulinda* women experienced the pain of Kāma from seeing

Kṛṣṇa. Taking up from the grass the beautiful *kuṅkuma* powder that had decorated the breasts of the women and was red from the lotus

feet of Urugāya [Kṛṣṇa], they smeared it on their faces and breasts,

let go of their distress and became enchanted.

18. Look at this mountain, O women. It is overjoyed to be touched

by Balarāma's and Kṛṣṇa's feet! It is the best of the servants of Hari

because it honors those Two, as well as the herds of cows, by [gifts]

of radishes, caves, good pasturage, and water.

19. O girlfriends, when those Two, conspicuous by Their cords and

ropes for tying cows, lead the cows and cowherd boys into nearby

forests, those embodied beings who are capable of movement are

made motionless by the sounds of that renowned ute with its sweet

harmonies. The trees bristle with ecstasy—it is a wonderful thing."

20. Discussing in this way the pastimes of *Bhagavān*, who was wandering around in Vṛndāvana, the *gopīs* entered into a state of complete absorption in Him.

PART IV

Caitanya's *Śikṣāṣṭakam*

The Eight Verses of Instruction

While Caitanya imparted extensive teachings to Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī, which are essentially the new revelations underpinning the speci cs of the Gauḍīya theology outlined in part 1, he himself wrote only these eight (aṣṭha *) verses of instruction (* sikṣā *).*

The rst verse is highly embellished in terms of the literary ornamentations, alaṅkāra, *of Sanskrit poetics,* kāvya *(that is, replete with similes and metaphors), which aesthetically frame in a poetic manner the theological points imparted.*

1. May Kṛṣṇa's *saṅkīrtana* be supremely triumphant. The chanting of the names of Kṛṣṇa cleanses the mirror of the heart. It extinguishes

the great forest re of *saṁsāra*. It bestows moonlight on the white night-blooming lotus of supreme bene t. 1 It gives life to the young bride of

wisdom. It increases the ocean of bliss. It bestows the taste

of the highest nectar at every step. It cleanses the mind completely.

2. You have manifested many names and invested them with all

Your potency. There are no restrictions as to when to chant them,

the only criterion is absorbing the mind in them. Despite this grace

of Yours, O *Bhagavān*, my misfortune is such that I was born in this world without any attraction for them.

3. The name of Hari should always be chanted while considering oneself lower than a blade of grass, and while being more tolerant

than a tree. One should be free from any desire for personal respect, but yet one should o er respect to others.

4. I do not desire wealth, followers, beautiful women, or poetic virtuosity, O Lord of the Universe. I wish only for *bhakti* for You, *Īśvara*, that is without any motive, birth after birth.

5. O son of Nanda. Please consider me to be Your servant who has

fallen into the dangerous ocean of *saṁsāra*. Consider me to be like a speck of dust attached to Your lotus feet.

6. When will streams of tears pour from my eyes from chanting Your

name? When will my voice clog up and falter with emotion? When

will my body appear with its hairs bristling in ecstasy? 2

7. In the absence of Govinda, the blinking of an eye seems like an

entire *yuga* aeon, the eyes behave like the rainy season, and this entire universe appears empty.

8. I am devoted to Kṛṣṇa’s feet. He may embrace me, or crush me.

Or He may pierce my heart by not appearing before me. That irt

may do as He pleases, but only He and no one else will remain the

Lord of my life.

PART V

The *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*

Athāto bhaktiṁ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ

1. Now we will explain *bhakti* in detail.

Sā tv asmin parama-prema-rūpā

2. In this matter, the nature of *bhakti* is supreme love.

or:

The nature of *bhakti* is supreme love for Him *(Bhagavān*).

Amṛta-svarūpā ca 3. And its nature is eternal nectar.

Yal labdhvā pumān siddho bhavati amṛto bhavati tṛpto bhavati 4. When a person attains *bhakti*, he or she becomes perfected, he or she becomes immortal, and he or she becomes fully satis ed.

Yat prāpya na kiñcid vāñchati na śocati na dveṣṭi na ramate notsāhī

bhavati 5. After attaining it, a person does not desire, lament over, hate, enjoy, or show enthusiasm for anything else.

Yaj jñātva matto bhavati stabdho bhavati ātmārāmo bhavati 6. Once one knows it, one becomes mad with love, one becomes

overwhelmed with ecstasy, and one nds bliss in the self.

Sā na kāmayamānā nirodha-rūpatvāt 7. It is not caused by lust; its nature is cessation.

Nirodhas tu loka-veda-vyāpāra-nyāsaḥ

8. “Cessation” means the renouncing of all Vedic (that is, mundane

ritualistic) and worldly activities.

Tasminn ananyatā tad-virodhiṣūdāsīnatā ca 9. And also exclusive devotion to *Īśvara* and disinterest in everything contrary to that.

Anyāśrayāṇāṁ tyāgo ‘nanyatā

10. “Exclusive devotion” means relinquishing any other refuge

[other than *Īśvara*].

Loka-vedeṣu tad-anukūlācaraṇaṁ tad-virodhiṣūdāsīnatā

11. “Disinterest to everything contrary to that” means engaging

[only] in activities favorable to that goal, whether in everyday or in

Vedic duties.

Bhavatu niścaya-dārḍhyād ūrdhvaṁ śāstra-rakṣaṇām 12. Even after becoming xed in one’s commitment [to *Bhagavān*], the injunctions of scripture should be respected.

Anyathā pātitya-śaṅkayā

13. Otherwise there is danger of falling [from the spiritual path].

Loko ‘pi tāvad eva bhojanādi-vyāpāras tv āśarīra-dhāraṇāvadhi 14. And in everyday duties, too, there should be activities such as eating and

the like, to the extent necessary for maintaining the body for its duration of life.

Tal-lakṣaṇāni vācyante nānāmata-bhedāt 15. The sages describe the characteristics of *bhakti* variously, in accordance with di erent points of view.

Pūjādiṣv anurāga iti pārāśaryaḥ

16. Vyāsa says *bhakti* is love of doing *pūjā* and other such devotional activities.

Kathādiṣv iti gargaḥ

17. Garga says *bhakti* is love of *kathā*— hearing about the narrations of *Bhagavān*'s activities and incarnations.

Ātma-raty-avirodheneti śāṇḍilyaḥ

18. Śāṇḍilya says it is that which does not obstruct delighting in the

ātman.

Nāradas tu tadarpitākhilācāratā tad-vismaraṇe parama-vyākulateti 19.

But Nārada says it is o ering all acts to God and feeling extreme anguish upon not remembering Him.

Asty evam evam 20. It is just like that, it is just like that.

Yathā vraja-gopikānām 21. Just as was exempli ed by the *gopīs* of Vraja.

Tatrāpi na māhātmya jñāna-vismṛty apavādaḥ

22. In their particular case, there is no fault in the *gopīs* not being mindful of God's greatness. 1

Tad-vihīnaṁ jārāṇām iva 23. [Normally] without such mindfulness, love is just like that of mundane lovers.

Nāsty eva tasmin tat-sukha-sukhitvam 24. In such mundane love, happiness is not from the *happiness* of the beloved [as is the case with the divine love of the *gopīs* but is self-centered].

Sā tu karma-jñāna-yogebhyo 'py-adhikatarā

25. *Bhakti* is superior to ritualistic activity, knowledge, and the practice of *yoga*.

Phala-rūpatvāt 26. Because it is the [ultimate] fruit [of all of these].

Īśvarasyāpy abhimāni-dveṣitvāt dainya-priyatvāc ca 27. God is averse

to the proud and fond of humility.2

Tasyā jñānam eva sādhanam ity eke 28. Some say that only knowledge is the means to *bhakti*.

Anyonyāśrayatvam ity eke 29. Some say that the two are

interdependent.

Svayaṁ phala-rūpateti brahma-kumāraḥ

30. Nārada, the son of Brahmā, says *bhakti* is its own self-manifesting fruit.

Rāja-gṛha-bhojanādiṣu tathaiva dṛṣṭatvāt 31. This can be understood from the examples of a king's palace or of food.

Na tena rājā paritoṣaḥ kṣuc-chāntir va 32. The king is not satis ed by knowledge [about a theoretical palace], nor is hunger appeased by

knowledge [of food].

Tasmāt saiva grāhyā mumukṣubhiḥ

33. Therefore only *bhakti* should be accepted by those desiring liberation.

Tasyāḥ sādhanāni gāyanty ācāryāḥ

34. Great teachers sing about the means of attaining *bhakti*.

Tat tu viṣaya-tyāgāt saṅga-tyāgāc ca 35. It comes from renouncing sense objects and renouncing attachments.

Avyāvṛtta-bhajanāt 36. It comes from unceasing worship.

Loke ’pi bhagavad-guṇa-śravaṇa-kīrtanāt 37. And it comes from chanting and hearing about the qualities of *Bhagavān*, even while one is engaged in worldly duties.

Mukhyatas-tu mahat-kṛpayaiva bhagavat-kṛpāleśād vā

38. But primarily, it comes from the compassion of the great saints

or from a drop of *Bhagavān*’s compassion.

Mahat-saṅgas tu durlabho ’gamyo ’moghaś ca 39. The association of great saints is hard to achieve, di cult to understand, and infallible.

Labhyate ‘pi tat kṛpayaiva 40. And it too is attained by the grace of *Bhagavān*.

Tasmins taj-jane bhedābhāvāt 41. Because there is no di erence between Him and His devotees.

Tad eva sādhyatāṁ tad eva sādhyatām 42. Seek that association only, seek that only.

Duḥ-saṅgaḥ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ

43. Bad association should be completely given up.

Kāma-krodha-moha-smṛti bhraṁśa-buddhi nāśa-sarva nāśa-kāraṇatvāt

44. Because it is the cause of lust, anger, illusion, confusion of memory, loss of intelligence, and the loss of everything.

Taraṅgāyitā apīme saṅgāt samudrāyanti 45. Although these are like waves, from association, they become like an ocean.

Kas tarati kas tarati māyām? yaḥ saṅgaṁ tyajati yo mahānubhāvaṁ

sevate nirmamo bhavati 46. Who crosses over, who crosses over *māyā*? The one who gives up attachment, the one who serves a great devotee, and the one who becomes free from ego.

Yo vivikta-sthānaṁ sevate yo loka-bandham unmūlayati nistraiguṇyo bhavati yoga-kṣemaṁ tyajati 47. The one who resorts to a solitary place, who uproots all worldly connections, who transcends the

three *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*), and who renounces all clinging to security.

Yaḥ karma-phalaṁ tyajati karmāṇī sannyasyati tato nirdvandvo bhavati 48. The one who gives up the fruit of work and renounces activity

and thereby transcends duality.

Yo vedān api sannyasyati kevalam avicchinnānurāgam labhate 49. One who gives up even the Vedas, attains exclusive and unceasing

devotion.

Sa tarati sa tarati sa lokāṅs-tārayati 50. It is such a person who crosses over *māyā*, it is such a person who crosses over; and such a person causes others to cross over.

Anirvacanīyaṁ prema-svarūpam 51. The essence of love is beyond the ability of words to describe.

Mūkāsvādanavat 52. Like taste is beyond the ability of words to describe for a mute person.

Prakāśyate kvāpi pātre 53. It is revealed wherever there is a worthy vessel.

Guṇa-rahitaṁ kāmanā-rahitaṁ pratikṣaṇa-vardhamānam avicchinnaṁ

sūkṣmataram anubhava-rūpam 54. It takes the form of a very subtle experience that is transcendent to the *guṇas*, devoid of all desires, uninterrupted, and ever-increasing.

Tat prāpya tad evāvalokayati tad eva śrṇoti tad eva bhāṣayati tad eva cintayati 55. After obtaining it, one sees only *Bhagavān*, hears only about *Bhagavān*, speaks only about *Bhagavān*, and thinks only about *Bhagavān*.

Gauṇī tridhā guṇa-bhedād ārtādi-bhedād vā

56. Inferior *bhakti* is of three kinds, depending on the three *guṇas* or depending on the di erences in material needs and other such

things.

Uttarasmād uttarasmāt pūrva-pūrvā śreyāya bhavati 57. Each of these is successively higher than the previous one in terms of the ultimate

goal. 3

Anyasmāt saulabhyaṁ bhaktau 58. It is easier to attain success in *bhakti* than through other [paths].

Pramāṇāntarasyānapekṣatvāt svayaṁ pramāṇatvāt 59. It does not need to be proved by any other means, because it is its own proof.

Śānti-rūpāt paramānanda-rupāc ca 60. This is because its essence is peacefulness and its essence is supreme bliss.

Loka-hānau cintā na kāryā niveditātma-loka-vedatvāt 61. There should be no concern about the loss of worldly things, because Vedic and

worldly things and one's very self have been dedicated [to God].

Na tat siddhau loka-vyavahāro heyaḥ kintu phala-tyāgas tat-sādhanaṁ

ca kāryam eva 62. As long as *bhakti* has not been achieved, worldly and Vedic duties should not be abandoned; however, the fruits of action should be renounced, and devotional practices should be

maintained.

Strī-dhana-nāstika-caritraṁ na śravaṇīyam 63. One should not listen to topics that are atheistic or related to wealth or sex.

Abhimāna-dambhādikaṁ tyājyam 64. Pride, arrogance, and other such things should be renounced.

Tad-arpitākhilācāraḥ san kāma-krodhābhimānādikaṁ tasminn eva karaṇīyam 65. All one's activities should be o ered to *Bhagavān*, and even if desire, anger, pride, and the like are present, even they also

should be o ered to Him alone.

Tri-rūpa-bhaṅga-pūrvakaṁ nitya dāsya-nitya kāntā-bhajanātmakaṁ

prema kāryaṁ premaiva kāryam.

66. The three types of *bhakti* noted previously should be transcended, and one should engage in love, one should engage only

in love, in the devotional mood of the eternal servant or the eternal

lover.4

Bhaktā ekāntino mukhyāḥ

67. The foremost devotees are those who are exclusively devoted.

Kaṇṭhāvarodha-romāñcāśrubhiḥ parasparaṁ lapamānāḥ pāvayanti kulāni pṛthivīṁ ca 68. Conversing with one another with tears in their eyes and their hair standing on end and their voices choking in ecstasy, they purify their family lineages and the whole world.

Tīrthīkurvanti tīrthāni sukarmīkurvanti karmāṇi sac-chāstrīkurvanti śāstrāṇi 69. It is they who make holy places holy, it is they who make ordinary activity into pious activity, and it is they who make

teachings into true scripture.

Tanmāyāḥ

70. They are completely absorbed in *Īśvara*.

Modante pitaro nṛtyanti devatāḥ sa-nāthā ceyaṁ bhūr bhavati 71.

[Because of their presence], the forefathers rejoice, the celestial beings dance, and this earth feels cared for.

Nāsti teṣu jāti-vidyā-rūpa-kula-dhana-kriyādi-bhedaḥ

72. Among these devotees, there is no discrimination based on birth,

learning, beauty, family lineage, wealth, or occupation.

Yatas tadīyāḥ

73. This is because they belong to *Bhagavān*.

Vādo nāvalambyaḥ

74. Philosophical debate should not be relied upon.

Bāhulyāvakāśatvād aniyatatvāc ca 75. Because it is inconclusive and because there are so many points of view.

Bhakti-śāstrāṇi mananīyāni tad-bodha-karmāṇī karaṇīyāni 76.

Scriptures on *bhakti* should be followed, and activities that awaken *bhakti* should be performed.

Sukha-duḥkhecchā-lābhādi tyakte kāle pratīkṣamāṇe kṣaṇārdham api vyarthaṁ na neyam 77. Not even half a moment should be wasted, as

one passes one’s time free of happiness and distress, desire, and gain.

Ahiṁsā-satya-śauca-dayāstikyādi cāritryāṇī paripālanīyāni 78.

Nonviolence, truthfulness, cleanliness, compassion, and faith are the

behaviors that should be upheld.

Sarvadā sarvabhāvena niścintair bhagavān eva bhajanīyaḥ

79. God alone should always be worshipped with all one’s heart and

without any worry.

Sa kīrtyamānaḥ śīghram evāvirbhavaty anubhāvayati bhaktān 80. Being glori ed, God quickly manifests to the devotees and gives them

direct experience.

Trisatyasya bhaktir eva garīyasī bhaktir eva garīyasī

81. From the three Truths, 5 *bhakti* alone is the highest truth, *bhakti* alone.

Guṇa-māhātmyāsakti-rūpāsakti-pūjāsakti-smaraṇāsakti-dāsyā-sakti-

sakhyāsakti-vātsalyāsakti-kāntāsakty

ātmanivedanāsakti-

tanmayatāsakti-paramavirahāsakti-rūpaikadhā api ekādaśadhā bhavati 82. Although it is one, *bhakti* has eleven forms: attachment to the glories of *Bhagavān*'s qualities, attachment to His beauty, attachment to His worship, attachment to remembering Him, attachment to being His servant, attachment to being His friend, attachment to being His parent, attachment to being His lover,

attachment to surrendering one's whole being to Him, attachment to

being one in essence with Him, attachment to feeling separation from Him.

Ity evaṃ vadanti jana-jalpa-nirbhayā eka-matāḥ kumāra vyāsa śuka śāṇḍilya garga viṣṇu kauṇḍinya śeṣoddhavāruṇi bali hanumad vibhīṣaṇādayo bhaktyācāryāḥ

83. So say all with one opinion irrespective of public opinion, the great teachers of *bhakti*: the Kumāras, Vyāsa, Śuka, Śāṇḍilya, Garga, Viṣṇu, Kauṇḍinya, Śeṣa, Uddhava, Āruṇi, Bali, Hanumān, Vibhīṣaṇa,

and others.

Ya idaṁ nārada-proktaṁ śivānuśāsanaṁ viśvas iti śraddhate sa bhaktimān bhavati saḥ preṣṭhaṁ labhate saḥ preṣṭhaṁ labhate iti 84.

One who believes with faith these teachings of Nārada, becomes

endowed with *bhakti*; such a one attains the beloved, such a one attains the beloved.

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX II

GLOSSARY

NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appendix I

Establishing the Authority of the *Bhāgavata*

Purāṇa in the Vedic Tradition

On what grounds does the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition authenticate its elaborate theology of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*? It recognizes a number of *pramāṇas*, sources of knowledge, from which, like the *Yoga Sūtras* (I.7), it prioritizes sense perception, inference, and sacred texts. Since the senses and human reason are subject to defects and the limitations of human error, it also adopts the Vedānta stance that sacred testimony is the only fully reliable source of knowledge in those areas, such as the nature of God, that lie beyond the empirical domain (*Vedānta Sūtras* I.1.3). But is all sacred text qualitatively the same? The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology rests on the authority of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which it deems the paramount scripture. But what makes the *Bhāgavata* preeminent in the rst place? By considering Jīva's arguments prioritizing the epistemological superexcellence of the *Bhāgavata* on the textual landscape of his time, we will encounter an example of traditional Vedānta hermeneutics.

Let us start at the beginning. The backdrop to the Purāṇa literatures is the Vedic culture.

The oldest preserved literatures in India are the four Vedas (typically dated from the fteenth to the twelfth century B.C.E.), which primarily contain hymns recited in the ritualistic context of the ancient Vedic sacri cial cult of the Indo-Aryans. To these Vedas, prose instructional manuals were later appended called the Brāhmaṇas (the term applies to the texts as well as the caste specialists who transmitted and enacted their rituals). In addition to these, the Vedic corpus includes two other strata or genres of literatures: the Āraṇyakas, which, overlapping in subject matter much of the material contained in the older Brāhmaṇa texts, on the one hand, and the later fourth stratum, the Upaniṣads, on the other, do not have a distinctive characteristic of their own and thus need not detain us; and the Upaniṣads. It is in the Upaniṣads that material clearly matriarchal to what comes to be associated with "Hinduism," both philosophical and devotional, is rooted. In other words, it is in the Upaniṣads, seminal to the later classical schools of Indian philosophy as well as to the contemporary devotional traditions in the Purāṇas, that the origins of *bhakti yoga* are to be found.

The four Vedas, xed at a very early stage by various mnemonic devices, [1] along with the other three strata constituting the Vedic corpus, are considered *Śruti,* "that which is heard," eternally existent divine revelation. In contrast with these, the Purāṇas, along with all other pan-Indic classical texts such as the epics, are considered *Smṛti,* "that which is remembered," or indirect revelation, divine in origin but composed through human agency (albeit an agency usually associated with a divine gure). While they are considered sacred and authoritative, there are much more exible expectations associated with the Purāṇas, which transmit information for the general public, and thus adjustments according to the day and age are not viewed askance. On the one hand, they recognize the need to preserve and transmit faithfully the ancient sacred material intact. But, on the other, they claim to clarify, expand upon, and even supersede the contents of previous scriptures by revealing secret truths not contained either in the Vedas or in other Purāṇas (in fact, they expand on and supersede the contents of the *Śruti* enormously). They are ongoing revelation. Such uidity is inherent in the claim made by most Purāṇas of presenting the "essence" of the Veda according to time and place, as we shall see.

Nonetheless, and very important for our purposes, in Vedānta circles, the *Smṛti* such as the Purāṇas is considered authoritative only when it does not contradict the *Śruti*.2 The old Vedic corpus thus retains a sense of authority in later times, even when the rituals that are the central feature of the latter had long fallen into disuse (or been radically recon gured).

The important point here is that, considered not of human authorship (*apauruṣeya*) by all Vedic schools, 3 these *Śrūti* texts were deemed infallible revelation, even as much of their content was being viewed dismissively and superseded in the later traditions such as the Purāṇas, as noted above. But (o cially, at least) the status of *Śruti* retains its aura of paramount infallibility in comparison with the later texts that emerged on the religious landscape of India. What this means is that any later school wishing to consider itself "Vedic," howsoever nominally, and thus be accepted as bona de, had to develop hermeneutical strategies to somehow locate its theology and soteriology somewhere in the four Vedic strata—unlike, for example, Buddhism and Jainism, which simply jettisoned the Vedic corpus and established new traditions (albeit with their own claimed lines of preexisting authority).

But how do they accomplish this? Although it certainly has some clear protoroots in the old Vedic corpus in many areas, how does a text like the *Bhāgavata* locate itself in the *Śruti*, when it contains in other areas a theology, ontology, cosmology, soteriology, set of sociocultural speci cities, sense of historicality, and, in short, entire worldview with, at best, tenuous Vedic connections and, in other areas again, no Vedic precedents whatsoever? One need only consider the fact that there is simply no reference to the Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata*, the summum bonum of the entire text, in any Vedic (*Śruti*) text other than a solitary dubious passage in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (indisputable references to Kṛṣṇa as a Divine Being do not occur in signi cant numbers of Sanskrit textual sources until the fth and fourth centuries B.C.E. and then soon thereafter also in early Greek, as well as archaeological, sources).4 How does an exegete of a sect-speci c Purāṇic tradition for whom Vedic pedigree is indispensable deal with this?

Since we have selected Jīva as our lens into traditional hermeneutics and guide to the text, let us consider how he goes about resolving this dilemma of authenticating the *Bhāgavata* as a bona de scriptural source of knowledge,

upon which the entire edi ce of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* rests. Since Jīva's *Sandarbhas* are essentially commentaries on the *Bhāgavata*, in order for them to be taken seriously as a source of knowledge, he must rst of all establish sacred scripture in general as a valid episteme,[5] then make a case for the Purāṇic genre as a serious scriptural source, and nally indicate why he is devoting his exclusive attention to the *Bhāgavata* rather than any other Purāṇa.

Accordingly, Jīva brie y situates himself within the Vedānta epistemological tradition that accepts scripture as the highest source of knowledge. As heir to this tradition, he need not reformulate the extensive and well-known argumentation honed within the *pūrva mīmāṁsā* and *uttara mīmāṁsā* (Vedānta) lineages over the centuries.[6] Indeed, scriptural authority is accepted by all Vedic-derived "Hindu" traditions, [7] so discussions between schools revolved around which source of knowledge should be awarded primary status and which secondary and supportive, especially between scripture (*āgama*/ *śabda*) and the two other primary alternative modes of knowing: knowledge acquired through the senses (*pratyakṣa*, empiricism) and through inferential reasoning (*anumāna*, logic).[8] For Jīva and the Vedāntins, while the latter two sources are important epistemes, they are subject to four human defects: the imperfection of the senses themselves, and human subjectivity to delusion, error, and the cheating propensity. Besides, the senses cannot be expected to provide knowledge of that which lies beyond their sphere of perception. As for inferential reasoning derived from (and dependent upon) the senses, "Logic cannot establish anything conclusively" (*Vedānta Sūtras* II.1.11), so "one should not try to employ logic for that which lies beyond the sphere of thought" (*Mahābhārata*, *Bhīṣma Parva* V.22; quoted in the *Tattva Sandarbha anu* 11). For such reasons, for the Vedānta traditions that by Jīva's time had long been prominent in intellectual circles across India in general,[9] the Vedas (and here they primarily intend the Upaniṣads) are the only source of knowledge for transempirical, transrational topics, as they are deemed trans-human revelation handed down intact via lineages, the *paramparās* [10] (*Tattva Sandarbha anu* 10).

So Jīva's claiming the primacy of scripture was not a particularly controversial thing to do, even as other schools prioritized other sources of knowledge. But there are now several steps missing between the *Śruti* as universally recognized scripture par excellence, the Purāṇas in general, and

the *Bhāgavata* in particular. Here, too, Jīva has long-established Vaiṣṇava and Śaivite forerunners, as these traditions had long and thoroughly (throughout two millennia) permeated the intellectual landscape of India by the sixteenth century. So Jīva is able to avail of two well-known verses from the *Śruti* itself: one, from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, stating: "The *Ṛg-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sāma-Veda, Atharva-Veda*, Itihāsa [epics], and Purāṇa were breathed out by the great Being" (II.4.10); the other, from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, where the Itihāsa and Purāṇas are called "the fth Veda"

(VII.1.2). These are echoed by statements from another *Śruti*, the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*,11 as well as the widely accepted *Smṛti* text, the *Mahābhārata*, 12 all bestowing authority on the epics and Purāṇas as the fth Veda and as augmenting the Vedas. Thus he has invoked the *Śruti* itself to promote the Purāṇas as authoritative scriptural sources on a par with *Śruti*.

Even better, he then quotes a statement "*pūraṇāt purāṇam*: the Purāṇas [are so called]

because they complete," 13 to argue that these texts are in fact indispensable for understanding the very Vedas themselves. 14

Having done this, and with the authority of the Purāṇas as a genre now legitimated by the *Śruti*, Jīva next produces numerous quotes from the other Purāṇas themselves as to the preeminence of the *Bhāgavata* within the *Purāṇic* corpus—the verses quoted previously in "*Īśvara*, Pure *Bhakti*, and Motivated *Bhakti*" from the *Matsya Purāṇa* and *Padma Purāṇa*, dividing the eighteen Purāṇas according to *guṇas* with the *Bhāgavata* in the *sattva* category. 15 With this established, Jīva feels that he can now quote the *Bhāgavata* itself to bolster its indispensability as a tool to understanding the *Vedas*, without needing to further demonstrate its credential as a source of knowledge. We will return to this shortly.

In Purāṇic narrative, as we will see in the Tale of Vyāsa, the hymns of the Vedas, along with the Purāṇic stories, were transmitted orally through the rst three of the four *yugas*, or world ages—the *satya*, *tretā*, and *dvāpara yugas*. Then, with a view to preserving the material from the ravages of time heralded by the beginning of the present degenerate fourth world age of *Kali*

yuga, 16 the great sage Vyāsa ("the divider") divided the originally single ur-Veda into the four.17 Additionally, he is held to have composed the *Vedānta Sūtras*, which was written to clarify the seemingly contradictory nature of the Upaniṣads. 18

Vyāsa then compiled a *Purāṇa Saṃhitā*, or singular ur-Purāṇa text, from the tales, lore, anecdotes, and teachings that had been handed down through the ages. This original Purāṇa text was then further divided by his disciples into the eighteen known to later tradition. 19 In addition to his role as divider of the Vedas and compiler of the Purāṇas, Vyāsa is the traditional author of the enormous one-hundred-thousand-verse *Mahābhārata* epic (composed, like the Purāṇas, for those who had no access to the Veda owing to social restrictions, *SB* I.4.25). As compiler of both the Vedic corpus and the Purāṇic one, Vyāsa is thus deemed by the *Bhāgavata* to be the foremost authority on both the *Śruti* and the *Smṛti* (and tradition even assigns him the role of author of the primary and canonical commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras*, the Vyāsa *bhāṣa*).

We will see in the *Bhāgavata* (I.5.i .) that Vyāsa remained unful lled even after this massive and proli c output of knowledge, until his *guru*, sage Nārada, con rmed his suspicion that the cause of his despondency was that he had not yet described the ultimate goal of knowledge—he had thus far covered only lesser mundane topics concerned mostly with material well-being. This diagnosis resulted in the composition of the *Bhāgavata*, the *galitam phalam*, the ripened fruit of the Vedic tree (I.1.3), the essence of all the Vedas, Purāṇas, and Itihāsa epics (I.2.3; I.3.42). Here we see an excellent example of how a Purāṇa positions itself as superseding the Vedas, but the point in all this is that the *Bhāgavata* depicts Vyāsa, the author and composer or systematizer of just about all the most important sacred texts associated with the Vedic and late Vedic period and thus the ultimate authority on the *Śruti* and *Smṛti*, as himself acknowledging the primacy of the *Bhāgavata* among all other scriptures. Additionally, the *Bhāgavata* was mystically revealed to him, as we will see, making Vyāsa an experiential authority in addition to being a scriptural savant. Jīva has now arrived at a point where the *Bhāgavata* is a defensible and indeed preeminent source of knowledge in its own right.

From an academic text-critical historical point of view, there is little doubt that some of the material in the Purāṇas does go back to the earliest Vedic age. Many of the Vedic hymns assume common knowledge of bygone persons and events to which they brie y allude and which would have been remembered through tradition, and some of these are eshed out and reworked over time in the Purāṇas.20 As early as the *Atharva-Veda* of circa 1000 B.C.E., there are references to "the" Purāṇa21 and numerous references to it in the later Vedic texts. Thus, while the present Purāṇas contain later material, as well as references to events in historical time, they also contain ancient narratives and anecdotes reworked from the earliest period of protohistory in southern Asia. (And it is for such reasons that it is futile to speak of absolute dates for any Purāṇa as a whole, since one would have to speak of the age of individual sections within particular Purāṇas; one can venture to estimate the

nal date of a Purāṇa's composition only in its extant form.)22

And as far as the Kṛṣṇa co-relatable to the *Bhāgavata* Kṛṣṇa is concerned, although He does not surface on the historical landscape of ancient India as derived from (academically dated) textual and archaeological sources until a few centuries prior to the Common Era, there is at least one point of overlap between traditional knowledge sources prioritizing the authority of *Śruti* and *Smṛti* and our modern ones prioritizing empirico-deductive methods.

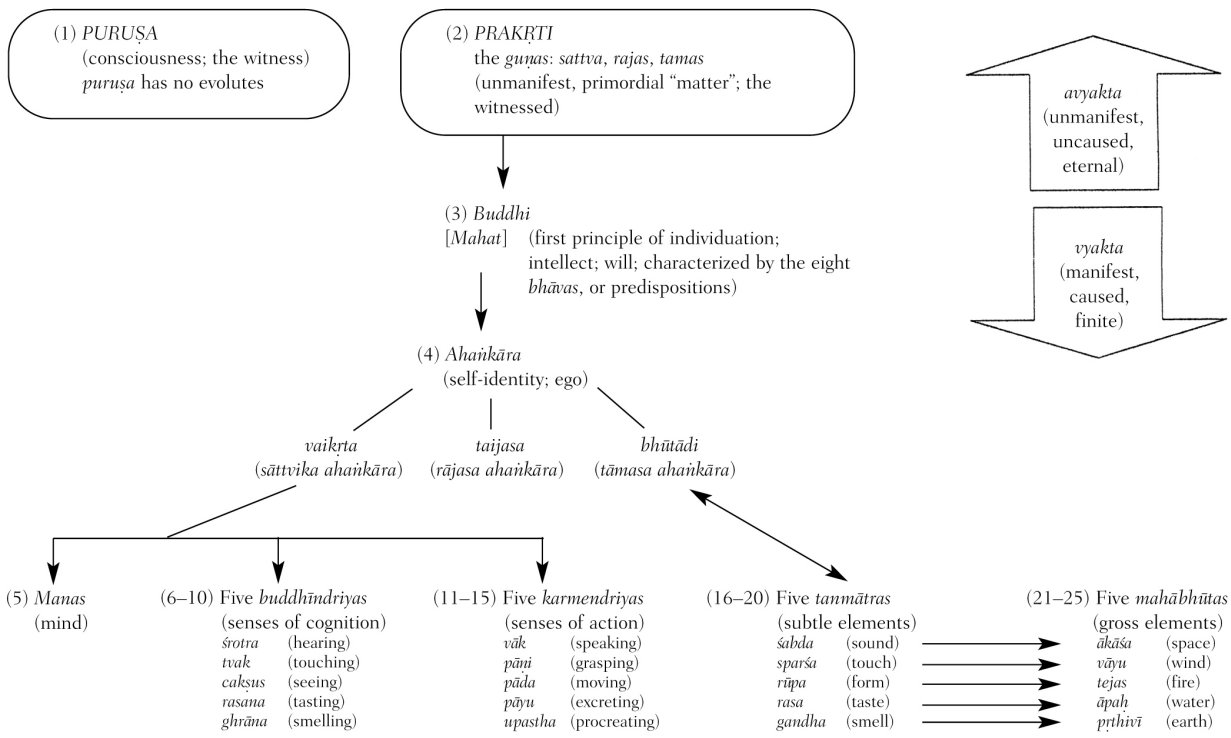
One point common to all sources is that Kṛṣṇa appears at the end of some sort of age—be it the late Vedic age as construed by Indological historiography or the very end of the *dvāpara- yuga* third age as proposed by traditional bodies of knowledge such as the epics and Purāṇas. And there is agreement that Kṛṣṇa is pivotal in the inauguration of a new age —the rise of the *bhakti* movements prior to the turn of the Common Era that swept across the subcontinent, relegating the old Vedic rites to quasi-redundant, or radically recon gured, forms as documented by historians and the beginning of the *Kali yuga* in traditional epic and Purāṇic narrative, which is held to do similar sorts of things, by tradition.

Jīva still has much hermeneutical work left to do. Not only must the *Bhāgavata*'s essential message be tailored to embody and also supersede those of the Vedas, but the speci cs of the Kṛṣṇa theology of his sixteenth-

century lineage must also be accommodated within the *Bhāgavata*. This latter task is accomplished fairly e ortlessly, that is to say organically, for much of the material that occupied the concern of this volume, *bhakti yoga*, but already by the end of part 1 (in the chapter “The Practices of Bhakti”), where we encountered the more advanced stages of *rāgānugā* and *rāgātmikā bhakti*, Jīva and Rūpa entered into transcendent domains that are nowhere to be explicitly found even in the *Bhāgavata*. Even from a traditional exegetical point of view, these must be acknowledged to be as implicitly “concealed” in the *Bhāgavata* as is Kṛṣṇa Himself in the *Śruti*. In fact, Jīva’s tradition itself lays claim to transmitting hitherto unrevealed Truths imparted by Caitanya to the *Gosvāmīs*, especially Rūpa and Sanātana. And Caitanya is deemed to be an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa by this tradition (again on the basis of verses scattered throughout the Purāṇas), 23 which is the basis upon which his teachings are considered authoritative in turn. So while in e ect we are dealing with new revelation, traditional exegesis is uncomfortable with the idea of “new” revelation, as Truth is eternal; so it cannot be newly created, even as it may be revealed fully or partially according to time and place. So Jīva and the *Gośvamīs* set out to anchor Caitanya’s teachings to the larger *Śruti* and *Smṛti* corpus in similar sorts of ways as the *Bhāgavata* is legitimized. Following them in this endeavor would take us too far a eld, but hopefully this brief overview of how the *Bhāgavata* itself has been authenticated has a orded some sense of the world of Vedānta exegesis.

Given its well-established roots on the Indian subcontinent, and its recent exportation to the West, 24 we thus nd in the tradition of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* an excellent example of a “living” tradition, with its tensions and resolutions in matters of epistemological authoritativeness, its periodic revelatory “updates,” and its ongoing dialogue with its ever-evolving greater intellectual context, all of which lie at the very core of the phenomenon of religion in general, and certainly of the vibrant and variegated Hindu *bhakti* traditions.

DIAGRAM OF THE TWENTY-FIVE *TATTVAS* OF CLASSICAL *SĀṄKHYA*
Illustrating the evolution of *prakṛti* according to the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa



Appendix II: Sāṅkhya Chart

Glossary

Acyuta, name of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa (one who never falls down; the infallible Lord).

Adhokṣaja, name of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa.

advaita, philosophy of nondualism.

aho! , an exclamation in Sanskrit, with various meanings from alarm and despair to surprise or appreciation, depending on context.

aṁśa, partial incarnation of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

ānanda, bliss.

Antaryāmī, form of Viṣṇu who pervades the *ātman* and all reality.

anuccheda (*anu*), a section of a *Sandarbha*.

apsarā, a type of celestial being.

artha, prosperity; one of the traditional four goals of human life (*puruṣārthas*).

Ārya, a follower of civilized Vedic culture.

asamprajñāta, nal stage of *samādhi*; consciousness absorbed in its own nature.

āsana, bodily poses; third of the eight limbs of *yoga*.

āśrama, one of the progressive stages of life (student, householder, religious retiree, solitary ascetic); also, an ascetic's hermitage, usually in the forest.

asura, demoniac being; enemy of the celestials.

ātman, the soul, also known as *puruṣa.*

avatāras, divine descents of Viṣṇu into the world.

avidyā, ignorance of the *ātman.*

Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's brother (often simply referred to as Rāma).

Bhagavad Gītā, episode of the *Mahābhārata* epic that has become a quintessential Sanskrit scripture; Kṛṣṇa's discourse to Arjuna.

Bhagavān, name for God.

bhāgavata, devotee of *Bhagavān*; *bhakta.*

Bhāgavata (*Purāṇa*), the primary scripture for the Kṛṣṇa traditions .

bhakti, devotion to *Bhagavān.*

Bhārata, traditional term for India; named after Bharata, a great devotee who retired to the forest.

bhāva, devotional state of mind in a speci c relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Brahmā, the secondary creator, functions like an engineer, manipulating the *prakṛtic* stu to create the speci c forms of the universe.

brahmacārya, the period up to the age of twenty-ve, when students would study Vedic knowledge systems under the tutelage of the teacher.

Brahman, name for the Absolute Truth in the Upaniṣads.

brāhmaṇa, teaching/priestly caste.

Caitanya, sixteenth-century Kṛṣṇa ecstatic, considered an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa by his followers.

cakra, Viṣṇu's discus weapon.

cāraṇa, type of celestial being.

citta-vṛtti-nirodha, stilling of all states of mind; de nition of *yoga* in the *Yoga Sūtras*.

daitya, demoniac being; synonymous with *asura*.

dāsya, one of the ve *bhāvas*, servitorship.

deva, celestial being.

dharma, used variously; in Vedic culture, the variegated duties incumbent on embodied beings; one of the traditional four goals of human life.

dīkṣā, initiation into a Vedic or *yogic* lineage.

dveṣa, aversion; one of the ve *kleśas*, obstacles to *yoga* in the *Yoga Sūtras*.

Gajendra, the elephant *bhakta*.

gandharva, celestial being, renowned for musical as well as martial skills.

Garuḍa, Viṣṇu’s eagle carrier.

Gītā, see *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Goloka, divine *brahman* abode of Kṛṣṇa.

Govinda, name of Kṛṣṇa, “Lord of the cows.”

gṛhastha, householder.

guṇa, one of the three metaphysical strands formative of *prakṛti*.

guru, teacher.

Hari, name of Kṛṣṇa.

Hiraṇyakaśipu, demon father of Prahlāda.

Indra, warrior chief of the celestials.

Īśvara, term for God.

jīva, embodied soul.

Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six principal followers of Caitanya in the sixteenth century; wrote the *Sandarbhas*.

jñāna, knowledge; sometimes used as a synonym for consciousness.

jñānendriyas, instruments for attaining knowledge: hearing (ears), touching (skin), tasting (tongue), smelling (nose), seeing (eyes).

kaivalya, liberation; the autonomy of the *ātman* from *saṁsāra*.

Kali yuga, last and most degraded of the four ages; the current age.

kāma, material enjoyment; one of the traditional four goals of human life (*puruṣārthas*).

Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa’s evil uncle, king of Mathurā.

karma, action; every action breeds a corresponding reaction.

karmendriyas, ve working senses: speaking (mouth), grasping (hands), locomotion (feet), excreting (anus), procreation (genitals).

kaustubha, gem worn by Kṛṣṇa.

kīrtana, the chanting of the names and deeds of *Īśvara*.

kleśa, the ve obstacles to yoga in the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.4): ignorance (of the *ātman*), ego, desire, aversion, clinging to life.

kṣatriya, warrior/administrative cast.

Kuru, royal dynasty of both the Pāṇḍavas and their cousins in the *Mahābhārata* epic.

līlā, pastimes, particularly used in the *Bhāgavata* to point to Kṛṣṇa’s loving pastimes with His beloved devotees.

madhura, one of the *bhāvas*; amorous mood.

Madhva, thirteenth-century theistic philosopher of Vedānta; founder of the *dvaita* lineage.

Mahābhārata, great epic of the story of the descendants of Bharata; features the strife of the Pāṇḍavas and their cousins and their subsequent saga culminating in the great war between them.

mahābhūtas, the ultimate elements of Sāṅkhya metaphysics: earth, water, re, air, ether.

mahant, saintly person or great soul.

Maitreya, sage who delivers teachings to Vidura at various places in the *Bhāgavata*.

māyā, illusion covering the *ātman* causing it to misidentify with its gross and subtle coverings; a negative function (see also *yogamāyā*).

Mīmāṁsā, a school of Indian philosophy concerned with Vedic ritualism.

mokṣa, liberation from *saṁsāra.*

Mokṣadharma, a section of the *Mahābhārata* that is particularly philosophical in nature.

mukti, liberation from *saṁsāra*.

Nanda, Kṛṣṇa's foster father.

Nārada, a traveling sage and preeminent *bhakta.*

Nārāyaṇa, the supreme *Īśvara*, Viṣṇu.

nirbīja, contentless awareness absorbed in its own nature; the nal state of *yoga*.

nirodha, cessation; used primarily to refer to meditative states.

Nṛsiṁha , ManLion incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Nyāyā, school of Indian philosophy specializing in inferential debate.

Pāṇḍava, ve sons of Pāṇḍu.

paramahaṁsa, literally "great swan"; nal of the four stages of *sannyāsa*, the renounced order of life.

pāramārthika, highest reality compared with conventional reality (see *vyāvahārika*).

Paramātman, form of Viṣṇu pervading the *ātman*; synonymous with *Antaryāmī.*

Parīkṣit, king who receives the teachings of the *Bhāgavata* from Śuka; grandson of Arjuna.

Patañjali, author of the classical text on the practice and goal of *yoga*.

Prācīnabarhis, king to whom Nārada delivers the allegory of King Purañjana.

Prahlāda, great child *bhakta*, son of the demon king Hiranyakaśipu.

Prajāgara, the serpent protector in the Purañjana allegory.

prāṇa, life airs.

prāṇāyama, control of the breath in *yoga* practice; fourth of the eight limbs of *yoga*.

prema, love; in *bhakti*, love of God.

pūjā, worship, usually of a deity, involving items such as ghee lamps and incense.

Purāṇa, genre of ancient literature focusing on the forms of *Īśvara*.

Purañjana, the king in the allegory Nārada delivers to King Prācīnabarhis.

Purañjanī, Purañjana's wife in the allegory.

puruṣa, synonym for *ātman*; innermost consciousness.

puruṣa-arthas, the four conventional goals of life: *dharma*, performance of duty; *artha*, attainment of prosperity; *kāma*, ful llment of desires; *mokṣa*, liberation from all these.

rāgānuga, a *bhakta* immersed in *rāgānugā bhakti*.

rāgānugā, spontaneous form of *bhakti*.

rāgātmika, eternally perfected and liberated *bhakta*.

rajas, one of the three *guṇas*: energy, power, desire, and so forth.

Rāma, incarnation of *Īśvara*.

Rāmānuja, eleventh-to twelfth-century Vedānta theologian; founder of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism.

rasa, experience of *bhakti.*

rāsa, Kṛṣṇa’s dance with the gopīs.

Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of the six *Gosvāmī* followers of Caitanya and proli c author.

sādhu, ascetic.

Śaivite, devotee of Śiva.

sakhya, one of the ve *bhāvas*: friendship.

Śākta, follower of a form of the Goddess.

śakti, power.

samādhi, nal stages of *yoga* culminating in awareness becoming immersed in its own pure nature; the eighth of the eight limbs of *yoga.*

samprajñāta, penultimate *samādhi* state.

saṁsāra, cycle of birth and death.

saṁskāra, memory imprint.

Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the six *Gosvāmīs* of Vṛndāvana.

Sandarbha, one of the six treatises by Jīva Gosvāmī establishing the philosophical and theological basis for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta tradition.

Śaṅkara, eighth-to ninth-century Vedānta theologian.

Sāṅkhya, school of metaphysics.

sannyāsa, full ascetic renunciant.

sat-cit-ānanda, qualities of *brahman*: being, consciousness, and bliss.

satsaṅga, association of saints.

sattva, one of the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, characterized by qualities such as wisdom, detachment, lightness, and peacefulness.

Sātvatas, a community devoted to Kṛṣṇa.

siddha, perfected being.

Śiva, a primary form of *Īśvara*.

smaraṇa, retaining sacred narratives and teachings in mind.

Smṛti, sacred text posterior to the Vedas , but with links thereto.

śravaṇa, hearing from sacred texts.

śrī, an honori c, used as an appellative of respect before a person's name.

Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune.

Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa, also referred to as the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, or just *Bhāgavata*; most important of the Purāṇas and dedicated to Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

śrīvatsa, tuft of hair on Kṛṣṇa's chest.

Śruti, sacred text; the Vedic corpus.

śūdra, the employed as well as artisan caste.

Śuka, the principal speaker of the *Bhāgavata*, which he relates to King Parīkṣit.

sūra, celestial; synonymous with *deva*.

Sūta, attended Śuka's discourse to Parīkṣit and then repeated the *Bhāgavata* to the sages at Naimiṣa.

tamas, one of the three *guṇas*, characterized by ignorance and laziness.

tanmātras, subtle qualities of the great elements, which later spring from them.

tapas, austerity.

tattva, literally “the nature of that-ness,” in Sāṅkhya; refers to all or any of the evolutes from *prakṛti*.

tulasī, plant sacred to Kṛṣṇa.

Uddhava, survivor of the great war who receives instruction from Kṛṣṇa in the form of the *Uddhava Gītā* in book 11. Most of book 3 is in the form of sage Maitreya’s instructions to him.

Upaniṣads, ancient late Vedic mystic-philosphical texts.

Uttamaśloka, name of Viṣṇu: “He whose praises are supreme.”

Vaikuṇṭha, the divine *Brahman* abode of Viṣṇu.

vaiśya, merchant/landowning caste.

Vallabha, sixteenth-century contemporary of Caitanya; a great theologian who founded the school of *puṣṭi-mārga*.

vānaprastha, third stage of life when husband and wife begin to practice celibacy, detach themselves from the household, and retire to sacred places to pursue *yogic* practices.

Vasudeva, father of Kṛṣṇa.

Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva.

vātsalya, one of the primary *bhāvas*; parental relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Veda, one of the four most ancient texts in Sanskrit.

Vedānta, school of hermeneutics stemming from the Upaniṣads.

Vedānta Sūtra, primary text of the Vedānta tradition.

Vidura, half-brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who receives teachings from sage Maitreya at various places in the *Bhāgavata*.

viśiṣṭādvaita, Vedānta school stemming from Rāmānuja.

Viṣṇu, form of *Īśvara*; Creator of the universes.

Vraj, area around Vṛndāvana.

Vṛndāvana, the forest where Kṛṣṇa spent his childhood; present-day holy town.

Vyāsa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu and the legendary composer of the *Mahābhārata* epic, compiler of the Purāṇas, and divider of the one Veda into four.

vyavahārika, conventional reality.

yajña, Vedic rites involving oblations into a re sacri ce.

Yamunā, river in Vraj, central to Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*.

Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa's foster mother.

yogamāyā, divine illusion, one of the functions of which is to cover Kṛṣṇa's majesty such that His devotee can interact with Him as a child, friend, lover, and so forth.

Yoga Sūtras, classical text on the practice and goal of *yoga*; written by Patañjali.

yojana, distance, considered variously as two, four, ve, or nine miles.

Yudhiṣṭhīra, eldest of the ve Pāṇḍavas.

yuga, one of the four world ages.

Notes

Introduction to the Volume

1. The term *purāṇa* will be de ned more precisely below.

2. The term “history” has now long been associated not merely with textual narrative, but with empirical disciplines such as archaeology, linguistics, numismatics, and so on.

Clearly the Purāṇa literature such as the *Bhāgavata* dealing with Kṛṣṇa’s incarnation is not subject to this type of empirical scrutiny. On the other hand, a term such as

“myth” indicates that the stories have no factual basis at all. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with what constitutes a valid source of knowledge (for instance, empiricism, reason and inference, sacred scripture, and the like), and di erent epistemologies have been and are prioritized by intellectuals at di erent points in history and in di erent contexts and domains. So taking a position that the stories are purely “myths” would be an imposition of epistemological presuppositions and beliefs derived from the post-Enlightenment West upon the worldviews and convictions of countless millions of devotees over a period of two millennia and thereby would run contrary to the stated purpose of this volume, which is precisely to attempt to represent a sense of such beliefs. The term “legend,” in contrast, remains neutral as to the truth content of the stories, indicating simply that these stories present themselves as truth and have been handed down as such, without taking any further stance as to their veracity. We discuss such problems further in the chapter “Concluding Re ections.”

3. As is by now well-known, “Hinduism” is not a term found in Indic texts prior to the sixteenth century, as it was appropriated from the immigrants and invaders who had introduced it into India. We retain it now for practical purposes, given its de facto intractable usage to refer to the vast array of beliefs and practices that retain some form of nominal allegiance to the old Vedic texts.

4. Jīva and Rūpa quote the *Bhāgavata* abundantly, since as traditional commentators they strive to exemplify each theological point with a quote from the primary text in order to substantiate and authorize the devotional principles they are organizing into a system in their expositions. So by following Jīva and Rūpa, we will likewise be quoting profusely from the *Bhāgavata* itself in part 1 also.

5. We must note, of course, that there are many expressions of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, and we are featuring its more elite—in the sense of erudite and scholastic—canon-forming tradition, imparted by the lineage's founding gurehead, Caitanya, to Rūpa, whose work we feature, and other followers.

6. The term "Indic" refers to anything written in ancient Sanskrit (the linguistic name for which is Indo-Aryan), but I use it primarily when I wish to refer to commonalities in thought between Vedic, Buddhist, Jain, and other such traditions.

7. Thus, we begin with some delimiters: the goal of this volume is not to attempt to lay out some of the prominent features or personages of the diachronically and synchronically variegated landscape of *bhakti* by tracing its historical, geographic, social, or cultural roots from early historical sources through its growth into its numerous branches past and present. These are all essential projects in their own rights, but they are not the focus of interest in this volume.

8. As ltered through the subjective understanding of this author, needless to say: we claim no privileged access to any authorial intention underpinning these texts. However, we have tried to minimize our own lter by dint of translating the sources themselves, but, naturally, what we have selected and what omitted re ect our own subjective dispositions.

9. I note also, for my colleagues in the academy, brie y and perhaps simplistically, that it is my position that one way to navigate around the postcolonial, post-Orientalist impasse as to how to represent non-Western traditions such as those of *bhakti yoga*, without perpetuating the Eurocentric attitudes and stereotypes as well as the Christian presuppositions and biases of the founders and predecessors of our eld of the study of religion, is precisely to at least endeavor to allow these traditions to speak in their own

voices, using their own intellectual concepts and terminologies. In other words, to attempt to consider these traditions' own theologies, practices, metaphysics, epistemologies, and worldviews in their own right, without being ltered either through the religious vocabularies and assumptions of our Western religious traditions or through the theoretical categories and secular presuppositions of our modern Western post-Enlightenment academies. To explicitly or implicitly assume they have so little to o er in their own terms that they require the imposition of Western categories of knowledge and theoretical analysis is, to say the least, a remarkable act of hubris that has long extended its shelf life. This is not to deny that such texts have their own ideologies and attempt to normalize and impose their own structures of power, such as caste and the like. But so much attention has been directed to this aspect of *brahmanical* Sanskrit culture that we have chosen to direct our own focus on the aspects of the *Bhāgavata* that concern theology, soteriology, and praxis (we do, however, make some comments on *bhakti* and *dharma* in part 1; see "*Bhakti* and *Dharma*").

10. I use the somewhat problematic term "classical" to refer to transregional Veda-acknowledging texts that reached their completion by or shortly after the Gupta period from the fourth to the sixth century C.E. (as I have argued is the case with the *Bhāgavata*; Bryant 2002).

11. Of course, numerous preexisting ingredients that Patañjali was systematizing in his *Sūtras*, such as the eight limbs of practice and various other elements, surface or are appropriated in numerous distinct sectarian contexts, Jain, Buddhist, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, Śaiva, and so forth.

12. Although the view that Vyāsa was Patañjali himself writing a commentary on his own *Sūtras* has recently resurfaced with the dedicated work of Philipp Maas (2010).

13. Thus while, for example, the sixteenth-century commentator Vijñānabhikṣu may quibble with the earlier commentator Vācaspati Miśra, and introduce a good deal of Vedānta-related issues, there is no disagreement on the essential metaphysics of Yoga or on the nature of its mental states, practices, or goals (see discussion in Bryant 2009, xxxix).

14. Thus, from the various topics the *Bhāgavata* claims to comprise (noted later), part 2 is concerned with *mukti*, the attainment of liberation from su ering through the practice of *bhakti*.

15. From its stated list of topics, Kṛṣṇa is the *Bhāgavata*'s tenth and nal subject matter, the substratum (*āśraya*) or goal of everything else.

16. See Bryant (2003) and, for the most comprehensive academic study on the Purāṇas as a genre, Rocher (1986).

17. Based on Bryant (2003, ix .).

18. Even the non-Vedic Buddhist and Jain traditions partly de ned themselves in contradistinction to the Vedic one.

19. For instance, see *Kūrma Purāṇa, Pūrva* 52.19–20; *Padma Purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa* 236.18–

21.

20. There are, of course, other texts, such as the *Āgamas* and *Pañcarātras*, that provide much information pertaining to the minutiae of ritual and theological technicalities, but they are of interest primarily to ritual specialists and theologians.

21. In addition to the eighteen *mahā* (great) Purāṇas, there are a further eighteen *upa* (minor) Purāṇas, which are just as extensive in scope but deemed less authoritative, being later in composition and much less widespread.

22. See *Matsya Purāṇa* 53.9–11; *Śiva Purāṇa* VII.1.1.37–38.

23. Brahmā is more of an engineer than a creator in the classical sense, since he creates the forms of the universe from preexisting matter. But in texts such as the *Bhāgavata*, matter itself emanates from Viṣṇu, who is thus the primary creator. Śiva is assigned the same status in the Śaiva Purāṇas, but Brahmā is never the supreme creator God in this ultimate sense.

24. *Gītā* (VIII.17) points to Brahmā's life span.

25. The Goddess (Śākta) traditions tend to be monistic, rather than strictly monotheist, a distinction we will discuss in part 5.

26. See the papers in Gupta and Valpey (2013) as well as Beck (2005) for some sense of this. See also the papers in “Vaishnavism and the Arts” in *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 21, no. 2 (2013).

27. Much of this explosion of interest in the text stems from our featured sixteenth-century Caitanya tradition, of which Jīva is a follower.

28. See Sharpe (1985, 83 .) and Davis (2015) for some sense of this.

29. There are actually several thousand verses fewer than eighteen thousand, but traditional exegetes factor in the extra length of prose passages, as well as colophons and the like, to justify the traditional number (see Satyanārāyaṇa Dāsa 1995, 80n1) for discussion.

30. These were initiated by in uential charismatics such as Caitanya and Vāllabha, whom we will encounter within.

31. This is mostly on the grounds that neither the later dynasties nor later famous rulers such as Harṣa in the seventh century C.E. are to be found in the king lists contained in the texts.

32. Bryant (2002).

33. A number of the other Purāṇas clearly mention the *Bhāgavata* along with some mention of its subject matter (*Skanda Purāṇa*, *Prabhāsa-khaṇḍa* 7.1.2.39–42; *Agni Purāṇa* 272.6–7; *Padma Purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa* 22.115, 198.30, and elsewhere; *Matsya Purāṇa* 53.20–22; these and other references from Satyanārāyaṇa Dāsa 1995). However, in contradiction to this, as we will see in the Tale of Vyāsa, the *Bhāgavata* places itself as being written by the despondent Vyāsa shortly after the completion of the other Purāṇas. Also, we need not concern ourselves with the controversy raised by the followers of the *Devī Bhāgavata*, that these references to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in the other Purāṇas refer to their *Devī* text, not that of the Vaiṣṇavas (for which see Mackenzie Brown 1983; and Dāsa 1995, 88 .).

34. See, for discussion, Preciado-Solis (1984).

35. See appendix 1 for discussion on the *Śruti* and *Smṛti* genres of sacred text.

36. For example, see III.8.7–9.

37. These are *sarga*, creation of the universe; *visarga*, secondary creation of forms within the universe; *vṛtti*, maintenance of the living entities; *rakṣā*, protection of living entities; *manvantara*, governance of the various Manu dynasties; *vaṁsa*, dynasties of great kings; *vaṁsānucarita*, activities of the kings in these dynasties; *saṁsthā*, annihilation of universe; *hetu*, motivation; and *apāśraya*, the Supreme shelter (*Īśvara*) (XII.7.9–10). Earlier in the text, these are labeled somewhat di erently: *sarga*, primordial creation; *visarga*, secondary creation; *sthāna*, maintenance; *poṣaṇa*, sustenance/grace; *ūti*, desire; *manvantara*, periods of the Manus; *Īśānukathā*, stories of *Īśvara*'s incarnations; *nirodha*, annihilation of the universe; *mukti*, liberation; and *āśraya*, ultimate shelter (II.10.1–2). According to other Purāṇas, there are only ve topics: *sarga*, *pratisarga* (destruction), *Manv-antarāṇi*, *vaṁsa*, and *vaṁsanucarita* (*Matsya Purāṇa* 53.65).

38. *Tattva Sandarbha* (*anuccheda* 58).

39. The name used here is Uttamaśloka, literally "verses about whom are supreme."

40. Book 11, in fact, is mostly devoted to Kṛṣṇa's instructions to Uddhava, sometimes called the *Uddhāva Gītā*. It covers a vast range of subject matter, including social and civic duties as well as all manner of *yogic* and religious practices, all culminating in *bhakti*.

41. The Indian painting collection at the Brooklyn Museum is a good example of this.

42. In point of fact, Vṛndāvana is the town that has developed since the sixteenth century in the place where a number of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes took

place, where Vraj includes but also extends beyond this to a much larger area touching the outskirts of Delhi.

43. See Haberman (1994b) and Entwhistle (1987).

44. See *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* 20.

45. Jīva Gosvāmī credits the directive to write his six *Sandarbhas* to his uncle Rūpa but acknowledges that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī compiled the original version of the *Sandarbhas*, based on the works of older Vaiṣṇava theologians, which he is systematizing and completing (*anu* 3–5).

46. A verse of unknown origin, quoted from Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa by Dāsa (*Tattva* 13).

47. We will also be representing arguments from the rst *Sandarbha*, the *Tattva*, in appendix 1.

48. The Vedānta tradition stems from the ancient Upaniṣads, the oldest mystic-philosophical texts in Sanskrit. By locating itself as a Vedānta tradition, the Gauḍīya theologians are laying claim to representing the Ultimate Truths of the ancient Vedic heritage, the oldest Sanskrit and Indo-European texts (see the chapter “The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies” and appendix 1).

49. Jīva adopts a fourfold schema in conceptualizing the contents of the Sandarbhas: the subject (*viṣaya*), who is Kṛṣṇa; the relationship (*sambandha*) between Him and His *śaktis*, “energies,” such as the *jīvas*, living beings; the process for attaining Him (*abhidheya*, that which is to be spoken of); and the ultimate purpose or goal to be acquired (*prayojana*), which is love of God, *prema*.

50. Satyanārāyaṇa’s Dāsa’s erudite Sanskrit edition and translation of the *Bhakti Sandarbha* is available, and at the time of this writing, he has completed the translation of and is preparing all six *Sandarbhas* for publication (see www.jiva.org for status). Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* is also worthy of more robust consideration for anyone with a serious interest in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, for which Haberman (2003)

has produced an excellent annotated English translation. I made use of both of these translations to determine which passages to select for part 1 of this work, but all Sanskrit translations are my own. Similarly, owing to the extensive amount of Sanskrit materials involved, I availed myself of the translations of the *Bhāgavata* noted in the next note, in order to determine which tales and teachings to extract for part 2, and then used the Chowkambha Sanskrit edition of the text for my own translations of these sections.

51. Here, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī's multivolume translation and commentary is the easiest available in numerous languages—as is his version of the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* as well as his trademark rendition of the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata* under the title *Kṛṣṇa* (all of which can be downloaded for free at www.vedabase.com). Being written by a preeminent devotee of *Śrī* Kṛṣṇa, the founder of ISKCON, the Hare Krishna Movement, these devotionally laden editions underscore the spiritual appeal of *bhakti* as what we will call in "Concluding Re ections" a "living tradition." This author's own lifelong dedication to studying the traditions of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* stems from encountering these books in the late 1970s. There is a highly recommended accessible edition with the Gauḍīya commentary of Viśvanātha by Bhanu Swami (2008–11), where one receives both text and verse-by-verse exegesis. Other than this, for those with access to Indian publishing houses, the Motilal Banarsidass edition translated by Tagare (1976–78) is excellent, as is the translation by Gosvami C. L. (n.d.). Additionally, we ourselves have published a literal annotated translation of the tenth book under the title *Krishna: The Beautiful Legend of God* (2003), and the stories of Kṛṣṇa in part 3 consist of extracts from this.

De nition of *Bhakti*

1. For example, see *Yoga Sūtras* II.15–16, and the de nition of *yoga* itself as "freedom from su ering" in *Gītā* VI.23.

2. The Cārvāka-related philosophies (which left no formal school or body of literature of their own) accepted neither an *ātman* nor *Īśvara* (see Bhattacharya 2011 for a compilation of sources from other schools on these traditions).

3. The rst time the term *viveka*, insight, is used in the *Yoga Sūtras* is in relation to the realization by a wise person that all is su ering. This *viveka* is then developed by the practices of *yoga* (II.28) and reaches its zenith as that which removes *avidyā*, ignorance, and bestows liberation (II.25–26).

4. Jīva calls this taking of shelter *śaraṇāpatti*. He quotes the Vaiṣṇava Tantra: "There are six elements in *śaraṇāpatti*: the determination to act favorably, the avoidance of unfavorable actions, the belief that '*Īśvara* will protect me,' the conscious acceptance of *Īśvara* as one's protector, the submission of the self, and humility" (*anu* 236, reference not given). The fourth item from this list, according to Jīva, consciously accepting *Īśvara* as one's protector, is especially associated with *śaraṇāpatti*, with the other ve serving as *aṅgas*, limbs.

5. In the words of the *Bhāgavata*: "O Lord! For one a icted by the threefold su ering in the terrifying re of *saṁsāra*, I see no other shelter than your lotus feet, which are like an umbrella raining down nectar" (XI.19.9).

6. For the *Gītā*, see VII.7, X.8, and throughout.

7. The great monotheistic deities are, in fact, almost always accompanied by their consorts: Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Śiva-Parvatī, Sītā-Rāma, and so on.

8. There are many names for Kṛṣṇa, and the one used here is Hṛṣīkeśa, "the Lord of the senses." I am standardizing these alternatives here for ease of reference, but on occasion I retain them in parts 2 and 3, as the choice of names re ects speci c associations that are being invoked according to context.

9. *Nārada Pañcarātra*, quoted in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant I.12, exact reference not given. Tradition associates this text, too, with the epic sage Nārada (see *Bhāgavata* I.3.8).

10. *Bhakti* is a nominal form of the verbal root *bhaj*.

11. *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (*pūrva kaṇḍa* 227.3). However, the rst line of Jīva's verse does not appear in the Nag edition of this Purāṇa. The verse adds

instead that the *bhaktas* engage in reciting the names and deeds of the Lord of the Universe.

12. According to Jīva, this eliminates other forms of meditation on Kṛṣṇa, such as hatred (as in the case of Kṛṣṇa's enemies, Kaṁsa, Śiśupāla, or Pauṇḍraka, indicated in *Bhāgavata* X.29.13, 66.24, and 87.23), which can also award liberation and are discussed in "Meditation in Hate and Lust."

13. We will elaborate on *bhakti* motivated by a desire for *jñāna* or *karma* in "*Bhakti* Mixed with Attachment to *Dharma* and *Jñāna*."

14. These are: residing in the same abode as Viṣṇu (*sālokya*), having the same opulence as Him (*sārṣṭi*), being close to Him (*sāmīpya*), having the same form as Him (*sārūpya*), and merging into Him (*sāyuja*/ *ekatvam*). They are discussed in "The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*."

15. These are: "*bhakti* destroys all obstacles (*kleśas*); it brings auspiciousness; it minimizes

[interest in] *mokṣa* (liberation); it is very di cult to attain; it has a special intense

bliss bestowing nature; and it attracts Śrī Kṛṣṇa" (*Upadeśāmṛta*, 17).

The Practices of *Bhakti*

1. We can recall that Rūpa divides his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (*Ocean of the Nectar of the Experience of* Bhakti) into four "quadrants," from which we will mostly be quoting the Eastern Quadrant.

2. The relationship between Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa will be discussed in the chapter "The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies." They are the same Supreme Being, manifest in di erent forms to accomplish di erent purposes.

3. The *Maitrī Upaniṣad* (VI18), for example, speaks of six limbs, and there were various other variants (see Bryant 2009, xxi .).

4. *Śravaṇa, manana, nidhidhyāsana*, hearing about, re ecting, and concentrating on the *ātman*, have their roots in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II.4.5). In later texts, a fourth is added, *samādhi*, absorption of consciousness in its own ultimate nature (see Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra* I.4.128).

5. As a technical aside, in Vedānta (and *Mīmāṁsā*) hermeneutics, the placing of items rst (and last) on a list re ects their importance with relation to other items listed.

6. "Some do not desire liberation, O Lord. Freed from all distress they immerse themselves in the great nectarean ocean of stories about the forms you have assumed in order to teach Truth about the self" (X.87.21).

7. Sarvabhāvāna Dāsa translation, 238–39.

8. "Dishonesty" is here understood as any scriptural teaching promoting bodily, mental, or worldly (that is, temporal and nonultimate) gain as its goal (rather than imparting teachings about the soul or God).

9. These are the miseries caused by one's own body and mind, by other living entities, and by the environment.

10. The *kalpa-taru* is a tree in the celestial realm that o ers anything requested of it.

11. The passage adds, "The *Bhāgavata* is permeated with the nectar owing from the mouth of sage Śuka." Śuka, the speaker of the *Bhāgavata*, also means "parrot." The poetic implication (*dhvani*) here is that as the parrot will choose the sweetest fruit with its beak, so Śuka has spoken the highest and most relishable of scriptures with his mouth.

12. *Aho!* is a common exclamation.

13. The passage appeals to the connoisseurs "of poetic experience (*rasa*) and experts of poetic moods (*bhāva*)." These terms will be discussed in "*Rāga*, *Bhāva*, and *Rasa*" in the context of the *Bhāgavata*'s appropriation of them. Their origins lie in Indian aesthetics, where *rasa* refers to the

aesthetic experience felt by the audience in, say, a well-performed drama, and *bhāva* the mood it invokes.

14. The *Mahābhārata* epic does in fact contain descriptions of the adult Kṛṣṇa, as does the *Harivaṁśa* appendage to it, which includes narratives from the youthful portion of Kṛṣṇa's life. Similarly with some of the Purāṇas, especially the Viṣṇu and Padma. But the *rasa* and *bhāva* elements of such centrality to the *bhakti* of the sixteenth-century Kṛṣṇa theologians are much less discernible in those literary sources.

15. These are four *puruṣārthas*, goals of human life.

16. The passage adds: "But that composition, even if its every verse is improperly composed, destroys the sins of people if it contains [the sacred] names denoting the glory of the unlimited Lord. Saints hear, recite, and glorify them."

17. "The chanting of the name of Hari has been prescribed for those *yogīs* who are disinterested [in material enjoyment] and who desire freedom from fear" (II.1.11).

18. At least, in the Indic context, this is partly true according to the Nyāya school of philosophy, although this school would hold that meaning is assigned by *Īśvara*. The followers of the school of Mīmāṁsā, in contrast (along with the Grammarians), would posit that Vedic words and their designations are eternal, based on their belief that the Vedas are eternal, and hence so are the words they contain. In fact, other philosophical schools, including perhaps Patañjali's Yoga tradition (see Rukmani 1975; Bryant 2009, 106 .), also hold that Sanskrit words and their denotations are eternal, and thus language is not conventionally derived.

19. We will discuss below how Kṛṣṇa's form is made from pure *Brahman*, consciousness (*caitanya*).

20. The famous *cintāmaṇi* is a gem found in Viṣṇu's *Brahman* realm of Vaikuṇṭha, which can ful ll any wish posed to it.

21. The “etc.” here applies to the vision of Kṛṣṇa, as also any contact with Him through the other senses.

22. While other monotheistic traditions tend to prioritize the notion of “visions” of God, *bhakti* traditions, while also featuring visions, prioritize sonic presence. See Beck (1993) for a problematizing of assigning higher epistemic value to the visual. In fact, from a philosophical perspective (for example, the school of Vaiśeṣiká), if form and sound are both qualities that reveal their substances, why should the form of a substance be prioritized as somehow more authentically true of the existence of that substance than any other quality such as sound? Since both require a sense organ to be perceived by consciousness (the *ātman*), what determines that the eye is a more reliable implement than the ear? Applied to *Īśvara*, then, why should *Īśvara* manifest as form be deemed more authoritative or authentic a spiritual experience than *Īśvara* manifest as sound?

23. Quoted from Dimock 2000, 899.

24. For the *kleśas*, ignorance, ego, desire, aversion, and fear of death, see *Yoga Sūtras* II.2 .

25. *Saṁsāra* is the cycle of birth and death.

26. For example, see *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* VI.2.17.

27. As is evident in the quote, in each *yuga*, epoch, humankind is prescribed a particular type of devotional activity in the Purāṇas. In the present and most degenerate age, the *Kali yuga*, *kīrtana* is prescribed, as it is the most easily accomplished for the misfortunate people born in this age. The *Bhāgavata* even states that people in previous *yugas* aspire to take birth in *Kali* because of this ease (XI.5.38).

28. See also XI.5.32.

29. Ārya is an ancient Sanskrit term denoting a civilized person, or one who follows the righteous codes of conduct outlined in late Vedic texts.

30. The pre x *saṅ* here indicates communal *kīrtana*.

31. In early *Brāhmaṇa* texts, *japa* refers to the soft repetition of Vedic *mantras* by priests.

See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I.3.28, VI.3.6; *Chandogya Upaniṣad* V.2.6.

32. See, for example, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*.

33. For instance, *Yoga Sūtras* I.27–28 and *Gītā* VII.8.

34. See VII.8, IX.17.

35. The traditional day in Hinduism is divided into eighteen *muhūrtas*, out of which seventeen are considered to be dominated by the lethargic energy of the *guṇa* of *tamas* or agitating energy of that of *rajas* (the three *guṇas* will be discussed in the chapter "The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies"). In only one *muhūrta* is the peaceful and content *guṇa* of *sattva* dominant—the *muhūrta* before sunrise.

36. This mood is how *bhaktas* might interpret "keeping its meaning in mind," *tad-artha-bhāvanam*, in Patāñjali's verse on how one should perform *japa* on *oṁ* (I.27–28).

37. The worship of the *tulasī* plant, sacred to Kṛṣṇa, is discussed later.

38. ISKCON has by now both spawned a variety of o shoots and set the stage for other branches of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition to also propagate the Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* of the Caitanya tradition (see Bryant and Ekstrand 2004).

39. Hence the phrase "Kṛṣṇa Consciousness." This phraseology was foundational to the language adopted by Bhaktivedānta Swami, founder of the Hare Krishna Movement, who was responsible for the transplanting of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* all around the world in the 1960s.

40. See also chapter 9 and the sequencing of practices in XII.1–12, and of *yogīs* in VI.46–47.

41. As a very interesting aside, and while this is beyond the scope of this work, it would be interesting to trace what I suspect to be the progressive "caucasianization" of Kṛṣṇa from paintings depicting Him in art prior to the

colonial period to the chronological production of art thereafter (one of our undergraduate students did, in fact, undertake a cursory study of paintings in the Brooklyn Museum collections that did point to this phenomenon). Be this as it may, both Kṛṣṇa and Shyāma (a very popular appellation for this deity) mean black. The color, when described, is that of a dark monsoon cloud.

42. Even as one can x the mind on any object "according to one's inclination" (*Yoga Sūtras* I.39), *Īśvara* is prioritized by dint of heading the list of *ālambanas*, objects upon which the mind can be xed in concentration, which according to traditional (*Mīmāṁsā*) hermeneutics indicates preeminence. Additionally, *Īśvara* as *ālambana* receives eight verses where other suggested *ālambanas* receive only one each.

Moreover, only *Īśvara* can bestow liberation, where other objects cannot (II.45). Hence Patañjali is discreetly and nonassertively, but nonetheless clearly, prioritizing this form of practice. (See commentary to I.44 in Bryant 2003, 152–53, for an application of *Īśvara* meditation in the context of Patañjali's *samādhi* sequencing.) 43. This metaphor is also found in the *Yoga Sūtras* commentaries. The commentaries to *Yoga Sūtras* III.1–3 highlight the di erence between *dhāraṇa* and *dhyāna* by comparing a dripping water tap with the thick, unctuous ow of oil. The drips from a tap have identical drops of water punctuated by gaps, paralleling the mind focusing on its support, interspersed with periodic distractions, as in *dhāraṇa*. The pouring of oil, which ows without drips, is comparable to the undeviating ow of the mind when it has reached a stage of undistracted one-pointedness, as in *dhyāna*.

44. See, for instance, *Yoga Sūtras* I.17 and 42–46 and commentaries.

45. This is sometimes referred to as *sa-guṇa Brahman*, *Brahman* with qualities, but the term *guṇa*, in this case, refers not to the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, but rather to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣiká sense of quality.

46. This account and the vision of Kṛṣṇa obtained by Nārada in I.6.18 are narrated in part 2.

47. Dimock 2000, 960–61. See also *Antya-līlā* 14.81–106.

48. This is a cultural renactment of *Bhāgavata* X.83 and the main religious festival in the East Indian state of Orissa.

49. Service to the *tulasī* plant is also included in this category of *bhakti*: "One should worship the Lord with pure water, garlands of forest owers, roots and fruits, etc., freshly cut sprouts and stems, and with the *tulasī* plant, which is dear to the Lord"

(IV.8.55). Although there is little explicit reference to worshipping *tulasī* in the *Bhāgavata* (see X.13.49), traditionally, a *tulasī* is typically grown and worshipped in Vaiṣṇava households, and certainly in temples. In prescriptive Kṛṣṇaism, food is o ered to the Deity (discussed in the next process) before consumption, in the form both of lavish o erings in temples and at the modest family meal of the Vaiṣṇava householder prior to the family partaking of it, and one leaf of *tulasī* is placed on each item of foodstu s. *Tulasī*'s sanctity is further underscored by the fact that practicing Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* can be recognized by the necklace of *tulasī* wood beads worn around their necks (as can Śaivites, by *rudrākṣa* beads).

50. See "The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*."

51. Verse number not given.

52. See Holdredge (2013) for an excellent analysis of divine embodiment in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

53. The *śālagrāma* is a sacred stone found in the *Gaṇḍakī* river of Nepal that does not require ritualistic installation to invoke the Deity, as *Īśvara*'s direct presence is deemed eternally present within it.

54. This is a form made of eternity (*sat*), pure consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*), rather than matter (*prakṛti*). But it is a form.

55. The *guṇas* are discussed in "*Prakṛti* and the Three *Guṇas*: *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*."

56. Of course, present *karma* re ects choices made in the past.

57. “Other agency” can include partial incarnations such as Vyāsa.

58. Literally “Joy of the king of Vraj,” Kṛṣṇa’s father.

59. This refers to the *Pañcarātra* genre of texts, which are the source for most of the ritual aspects of the Vaiṣṇava traditions.

60. Thus in Gauḍīya worship, twelve names of Kṛṣṇa (such as *oṁ Keṣavāya namaḥ*, *oṁ*

Govindāya namaḥ) are consecutively invoked in *nyāsa*, each one speci c to one of twelve bodily parts touched in a circular fashion (forehead, belly, chest, throat; then waist and arm on the right side; then shoulder on the right; then waist, arm, and shoulder on the left side, followed by top of the back, and, last, lower back.

61. This “root” *mantra* is typically received from the *guru* and is sect-speci c.

62. Thus, Nandi, Śiva’s bull carrier, for example, is also worshipped in Śiva *pūjā*, as is Hanumān, the monkey *bhakta*, in Rāma worship, and so on.

63. Thus, *oṁ namo Śivāya*, for Śiva; *oṁ namo Bhāgavate Vāsudevāya*, for Kṛṣṇa; and so forth.

64. We will see later that the *ātman* is an *aṁśa*, or partial manifestation, of *Īśvara* (who is everything, including the individual *ātman*) and, in this sense, “made of Him.”

65. The household Deity is typically moved from its altar in order to bathe and dress it and so forth and is returned upon completion of the worship. Temples with large immovable deities typically have a small Deity also invested with divine presence that can be moved and bathed and so on: “The Deity can be established in the temple in two ways: movable and non-movable; when worshipping a non-movable Deity, the *āvāhana* (invoking) and *udvāsa* (bidding farewell) are not necessary” (XI.27.14).

66. Jīva notes, in terms of the very personal meditation accompanying the rituals, that in order to cultivate love, “when one o ers food, one should contemplate the Lord’s beaming face” (*anu* 296).

67. This entire section contains more ritualistic speci cs, elaborating on those quoted previously in XI.3.

68. Tantric here refers to the aforementioned Sanskrit textual sources that deal with the prescriptive details of deity worship, the *Āgamas* and *Pañcarātras*. Note the di erent but possibly overlapping usage of the term *kriyā yoga*, the path of acts, in *Yoga Sūtras* II.1.

69. These are the four monsoon months, a period when itinerant ascetics (*sādhus*) are allowed to remain in one place.

70. *Ekādasi* is “the eleventh” day of the full moon and of the new moon. Vaiṣṇavas fast from grains or from all foodstu s on these two days of the month.

71. Vaiṣṇavas wear sacred markings made from paste from the clay of the *Gaṅgā* or *Yamunā* rivers on the twelve parts of the body mentioned previously as part of *nyāsa*.

72. In fact, by worshipping the Deity, the defect of disrespecting others can be curbed (*anu* 290). According to the *Bhāgavata*, it was in the third of the four *yugas* (world ages), the *Tretā* age, that deity worship was introduced, after strife entered into human a airs (one might assume so as to bring people together for a higher common purpose): “After perceiving the nature of strife between people in the age of *Tretā*, the deity worship of Hari was established by the sages” (VII.14.37).

73. I have reversed the order of the verses, here, placing 39–40 before 37–38.

74. See *Gītā* V.18.

75. As always, Jīva illustrates this practice from the *Bhāgavata*: “One who o ers obeisance to you with heart, words, and body; contemplates Your

compassion; and accepts the ripened fruits of personal *karma* that have been accumulated receives Your mercy and lives in a state of liberation" (X.14.8).

76. In Hinduism, 108 is a sacred number. Reasons given for this are as numerous as the sects that provide them. But, for example, the *japa mālā* (rosary) has 108 beads.

77. See Bryant 2009, xxiii .

78. This was composed by Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six *Gosvāmīs* of Vṛndāvana noted earlier. Drawing from the South Indian *Pāñcarātrika Āgamas*, it is the authoritative text on the full detailed universe of *vaidhī bhakti* for the Gauḍīya tradition.

79. In the nal three verses of the *Upadeśāmṛta*, Rūpa assigns gradations to the various holy places associated with Kṛṣṇa, such as Mathurā.

80. These are typically listed as cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of scripture, and devotion to *Iśvara* (for example, see *Yoga Sūtras* II.32). Rūpa would have assumed and intended the *yamas* as well.

81. These are also known as *niśkāmā bhakti*, devotion performed with no desire for any personal gain, and *sakāmā bhakti*, devotion performed for the ful llment of self-centered desire. The former is also known as *akiñcanā bhakti*.

82. "Even pure knowledge [of the *ātman*] free of attachment to the fruits of action does not shine forth if devoid of devotion for Kṛṣṇa; let alone action, which is always inferior when not o ered to *Īśvara*" (I.5.12, repeated verbatim in XII.12.53).

83. See Coleman (2010) and the bibliography therein for critiques of the text in this regard.

For an analysis and critique of the e orts of a modern Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava expression, ISKCON (the Hare Krishna Movement), attempting to reestablish the *varṇāśrama* social order and gender dynamics in its

communities based on the founder's reading of the *Bhāgavata*, see the articles in part 5 of Bryant and Ekstrand (2014).

84. The term *dharma* in fact has numerous usages: in Nyāya, it is the property of a substance; in Buddhism, the teachings of the Buddha; and so forth.

85. This is explicit in *Bhāgavata* VII.2.31 and 35; and arguably implicit in *Gītā* IV.13.

86. The cluster of *dharmas* incumbent on an *ātman* taking birth as a *kṣatrīya* female in one birth, for example, will be quite di erent from those the same *ātman* encounters in a subsequent birth as, say, a *brāhmaṇa* male, and completely di erent again from those in any birth as a dog (which also has a *dharma*, or inherent nature and place in the grand scheme of things), and so on. Even in one life, youthful *dharmas* might di er from elderly ones.

87. See, for instance, II.47 . Even the *Gītā* acknowledges that *karma yoga* was innovative for its day and age (IV.2–3), as the expectation surrounding the practice of *yoga* at the time was that it involved the cessation of all actions so as not to perpetuate *karmic* reaction and subsequent *saṁsāra*. Hence, in the older texts, including the *Gītā*, *yoga* is associated with asceticism, typically in the forest.

88. See, for example, IX.27.

89. See, for example, VII.11–14 and XI.17–18.

90. See, for example, XVIII.66.

91. See *Mīmāṁsā Sūtras* IV.2.

92. We will discuss the di erences here more fully in the chapter "The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara, Bhagavān, Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies."

93. See *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* I.7–11; *Gītā* II.42–45; *Yoga Sūtras* I.15.

94. The normative goal of Vedic *dharma*, the conventional religiosity of the time, was material gain in this world and the attainment of the celestial

realms in the next (see *Gītā* II.42–46 for a deprecatory dig at such attitudes).

95. Indeed, the text has extensive passages outlining the *dharma* duties of the various castes, especially in the eleventh book.

96. These are listed in the *Mahābhārata* (V.43.12) as knowledge, truthfulness, control, tranquillity, freedom from malice, modesty, tolerance, freedom from envy, charity, performance of sacri ce, austerity, and sacred learning.

97. See also III.33.7.

98. According to the commentator Śrīdhara, the threefold birth is that from the parents, that pertaining to initiation into the *brāhmaṇa* caste, and that pertaining to initation for performing a sacri ce.

99. Since those arguing for caste based on birthright do so on the authority of statements made in sacred texts, a number of Hindu apologists and spokespersons agitating against such notions of birthright have countered such claims by reference to contrary statements in other sacred texts (or passages in the same texts). The *Bhāgavata* is thus relevant to such enterprises.

100. For an important and well-argued critique of the view (including statements made by this author) that such subversion has potential relevance to the real world of gender or other social power dynamics, see Coleman (2010). Coleman, in fact, sees the *Bhāgavata* as consciously reasserting male patriarchal dominance. Nonetheless, where women were excluded from other forms of religiosity at the time, such as Vedic ritualistic recitation and active performance at the sacri cial rites, or orthodox Vedānta study, the fact that the *Bhāgavata* not only includes female participation, but extols it as preeminent, is not trivial.

101. These are all tribes outside of the Vedic fold, some of them foreign to the subcontinent, most famously the *yavana*, a reference to the Greeks (a Sanskritization of the term “Ionian”).

102. For a discussion of the social innovativeness of the *Bhāgavata*, see Hopkins (1966).

103. See *Bhāgavata* V.19.21 . for the celestials musing about how, from the perspective of *yoga*, they would have been better o being born on the earth.

104. See Doniger and Smith (1991) and Olivelle (1999).

105. These are also referred to *puṇya* vs. *apuṇya* in the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.14–15) and *karma* vs.

vikarma in *Gītā* (IV.17). The *Gītā* here also speaks of *akarma*, "inaction."

106. Of course, *samādhi* (*asaṁprajñāta*) in the *Yoga Sūtras* refers to the ultimate reimmersion of the *ātman* in its own nature (I.3, II.20), which is not of interest to Jīva's *bhakti* as we will see later.

107. Jīva exempli es *bhakti* performed to satisfy personal desires through the example of sage Kardama, who, desiring o spring, "worshipped through *samādhi yoga* and *kriyā*

yoga Hari, who ful lls the desires of those devoted to Him" (III.21.7). He notes that Kardama's case is exceptional, however, in that he was ordered to beget progeny by Brahmā and thus dutifully adopted this desire in order to comply with this request, not out of any personal inclination (*anu* 225).

108. The sense here is that because of poor deeds performed in the past, a person's intelligence is limited or deluded as a consequence and confounded even in his or her motives for approaching *Īśvara*.

109. Jīva in fact introduces a further tripartite schema in the *Bhakti Sandarbha* consisting of three divisions of "devotion mixed with *karma*" (*karma-miśrā bhakti*). In addition to *sakāmā bhakti*, and *kaivalya-kāmā bhakti*, he mentions *bhakti-mātra kāmā*, the adoption of *karma* or *jñāna* practices, but now with a desire for devotion alone. This third group, which performs a mixed type of devotion, *bhakti-mātra kāma*, also mixes *karma* or *jñāna* elements with its *bhakti*, but unlike the other two performers of *bhakti*, this third group does so with the intention of developing pure

devotion and not for the standard fruits associated with *karma* or *jñāna*. Jīva exempli es this with a passage, which we will nd in the Teachings of Lord Kapila, where we see practices associated with *karma* and *jñāna* mixed in with some of the nine processes of *bhakti* (III.29.15– 19).

110. This type of *bhakti* is exempli ed by Jīva with the following prescription: “Residing in an isolated place, with mind made pure by contemplating Me, the sage should meditate on that nondual *ātman* as being non-di erent from Me” (XI.18.21).

111. See, for instance, *Gītā* (VI.45).

112. As Rūpa notes in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.309, Vallabha was a contemporary of Caitanya, and his followers established a lineage extant today as the Vallabha *saṁpradāya*.

113. This is a reference to one of the ve types of liberation, *sārūpya*, that will be discussed in the chapter “The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies.”

114. See *Brahma Saṃhitā* 43 and Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta*.

115. This has some overlap with Plato’s analogy of the cave.

116. The inference here is a cause-and-e ect argument: whatever is present in the e ect must be present in the cause; living beings, who are e ects of some cause, have personalities, qualities, and forms, therefore it is at least logically defensible to propose that their cause must also have a personality, qualities, and form. In Indian philosophy, this is called the *satkarya* principle, typical of Sāṅkhya metaphysics, but also of Vedānta, albeit di erently construed. (There are schools, however, that refute these principles: Nyāya, Vaiśeṣiká, and Mīmāṁsā, upholding an *a-satkaryavāda* metaphysics: e ects are distinct entities, the products of numerous causes.)
117. In particular, the sixteenth-century lineages stemming from Caitanya and Vallabha, as also the earlier Vaiṣṇava theologian Nimbārka.

118. A curt mention is made that Kṛṣṇa is worshipped there by the Vedic hymns.

119. We can contrast this with the term “sport” or even “game,” which might contain a suggestion of drivenness or competition. The term *līlā* rst surfaces in literary sources in the *Vedānta Sūtras* II.1.33, where we nd the author addressing an opposing atheistic view that if there really were a God who is in possession of everything, He would not need to create, because people create in order to attain possession of something they do not already have. The *Sūtras*’ response to this is that “just as [one nds] in the world, it [creation] is merely *līlā* (play).” The commentators on this verse compare God with a king who, although completely ful lled, plays as an act of spontaneity, simply from fullness of spirit and not out of some unful lled need.

120. See X.23.37, X.45.44, X.52 . 36, and X.58.37.

121. Nevertheless, X.33.23 tells us that although Kṛṣṇa is *svarati*, “one whose pleasure is self-contained,” He still takes pleasure from His *līlā*, as do those devoted to Him—the residents of Vraj, including the livestock (X.23.36); the cowherd boys who accompany Him on His adventures in the forests (X.12.3); and the elderly *gopīs* who enjoy themselves watching and laughing at His childhood antics (X.8.24).

122. See X.14.44, X.51.46, and X.70.28.

123. See, for example, X.40.23; *Gītā* VII.14. As in Hindu philosophical discourse in general, the bonds of illusion are typically articulated in terms of attachment to one’s body, home, wealth, spouse, and o spring (X.4 8.27, X.60.52, and X.63.40).

124. See X.11.2 ., X.16.14, X.20.2, X.42.22, and X.61.2.

125. See X.12.27–28, X.70.47, and X.77.23, 28.

126. Kṛṣṇa does the same to His real parents, Vasudeva and Devakī, after they too become aware of His supremacy (X.45.1).

127. See the poetry of the sixteenth-century Sūr Dāsa for masterful juxtapositions of *līlā*

with periodic reminders as to His majesty (Hawley 2009).

128. The partial exception is some of the left-handed Tantra traditions, touched upon later.

129. See *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* III.2.2; *Yoga Sūtras* II.12–15; *Gītā* V.22 and throughout.

130. For an earlier expression of this directed toward Śiva, see *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* VI.21–

23.

131. Since *saṁskāras* are made of the *sattva guṇa*, discussed later, which also underpins not only the psychic makeup of an individual (the *citta*), but all gross physical objects, along with the other two *guṇas*, *rajas* and *tamas*, Yoga psychology is also, in a sense, metaphysics. There is no duality between the mind and matter in terms of their ultimate constitution (the dualism in Yoga and Vedānta is between consciousness on the one hand and mind and matter on the other, not, as with the Greco-Christian or Cartesian model, between consciousness and mind on the one hand and matter on the other).

132. We can note here that any form of recognition of an object requires that the object be already known and, hence, a memory. Thus, to recognize, in our example, the

chocolate in the shop window in the rst place, one must already have a preexisting *saṁskāra* of the chocolate—a prior experience of it. That *saṁskāra* may have positive or negative valences associated with it. If pleasant, the *saṁskāra* can morph into *rāga*, and if unpleasant, *dveṣa* (*Yoga Sūtras* II.8).

133. See introduction, note 49, for Kṛṣṇa as *viṣaya* (sense object).

134. Technically, *rāgānugā* imitates *rāgātmikā*, discussed below (Eastern Quadrant II.270).

135. This verse is in fact spoken by the incarnation Kapila, whom we will encounter within.

136. Rūpa de nes *bhāva* somewhat technically "as a special state of pure *sattva*, which softens the mind with a taste [for Kṛṣṇa], like a ray of the sun of love (*prema*)" (III.1).

The word for "taste" here is *ruci*, which is more or less synonymous with *bhāva*, which in turn is synonymous with *rati*, "attraction" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant III.13).

137. *Mamatā*. In this state of "my-ness," the *bhakta*'s intimate absorption in intense thoughts of God causes a feeling that one belongs exclusively to God, and God to oneself as "my" son, "my" friend, and so on.

138. *Anarthas* (which are the equivalent of Patāñjali's *kleśas*).

139. Rūpa uses the term "taste" (*ruci*) here, which he associates with *bhāva* in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant III.2. (Given this, I substituted *bhāva* so as to avoid overloading the reader with a plethora of Sanskrit terms and synonyms.) 140. See *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant III.6. "After appearing in the mind's activities (*vṛttis*), *bhāva* follows the natural inclination of the mind. It appears as if it has been manifest [by the mind], but it is actually self-manifesting"

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant III.4; see Haberman 2003 for discussion following Jīva's commentary on Rūpa). Kṛṣṇa's various *śakti* powers are an extensive esoteric topic beyond the scope of this discussion.

141. *Bhāva* can also be the product of past-life *saṁskāra* (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Southern Quadrant V.38). On a related note, *prema* can be experienced either with awareness of *Īśvara*'s majesty or in the form of what Rūpa calls *kevalā bhakti*, "exclusive devotion"

devoid of such awareness (that is, thinking of Kṛṣṇa as one's friend, child, or lover, under the in uence of *yogamāyā*; *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant IV.11). The former is generally for those following the path of *vaidhī*, and the latter corresponds to the mind-set of the *rāgānugā bhaktas* (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant IV.14).

142. See *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant III.2.

143. See *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant IV.17.

144. The usage of the term *rasa* in a *yogic* context goes back to the brilliant Kaśmīr Śaivite theologian Abhinavagupta (see Haberman 1988 for discussion).

145. There are also seven other secondary *rasas*, outlined in the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Southern Quadrant fth wave), which need not detain us here.

146. *Kaivalya-kāmā bhakti.*

147. The term here is *asamprajñāta samādhi*. See *Yoga Sūtras* I.18 for *asamprajñāta samādhi*, also known as *nirbīja* (I.51), the state where consciousness is immersed exclusively in its own nature, devoid of any and all other objects (I.3).

148. Reference not given. Here the term *nirvikalpa* is used as a synonym of *asamprajñāta samādhi* and *nirbīja samādhi*. Still other terms include *kaivalya*, *ātma-jñāna*, and the more generic terms *mokṣa* and *mukti*.

149. See, for instance, *Gītā* X.12 and IX.27 in conjunction with XII.16–18.

150. These terms are all synonyms, and there are numerous other terms for the generic-liberated state, which are less frequently encountered (*nirvāṇa* was a term used by all the *mokṣa* traditions in the earlier period, such as in *Gītā* V.26 and VI.15, even as it became associated with Buddhism in later times).

151. In Patañjali's terms, *draṣṭuḥ svarūpe 'vasthānam*, "the seer abiding in its own nature"

(*Yoga Sūtras* I.2).

152. He states this in his commentary to this verse of his uncle's work.

153. See Haberman (1994).

154. For a good accessible secondary source on *madhura bhakti*, see Schweig (2005).

155. We noted previously that the residents of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka have bodies and forms made of *Brahman* rather than of the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*; this includes the minds of the inhabitants: these too are made of *Brahman* (see X.13.54 in part 3). This will be discussed further later.

156. Therefore, when *rāgātmika bhaktas* engage in any of the nine processes of *vaidhī bhakti* such as hearing, chanting, or remembering, they do so spontaneously and naturally and not in the form of a prescribed discipline or cultivated practice.

157. These *bhaktas*, of course, possess the requisite attainments from past-life *bhakti* practices in this material realm.

158. As we will see, Kṛṣṇa is born in a cowherding community.

159. For an excellent discussion of this phenomenon, see Haberman (1988).

160. The text would have been heard orally in premodern times rather than read. Prior to the advent of the printing press, the *Bhāgavata*, as with the entire Purāṇa tradition, would have been orally transmitted. Only a relatively few *brāhmaṇa* scholars would have had access to costly written manuscripts, reproduced individually by hand, often under the patronage of a king.

161. The verse states that the *yamas*, moral principles, are *sārva-bhaumā*, "universal,"

which is an absolute term that needs no further quali cation. That Patañjali proceeds to qualify them by specifying birth, place, time, and condition as nongrounds for anyone angling for exceptions is redundant and therefore out of place and technically anomolous in the curt minimalism of the *sūtra* genre. It therefore represents emphasis, unusual for Patañjali but underscoring his commitment to the indispensability of *yama* practices.

162. It is only left-handed Tantra that proposes socially taboo behavior can be undermined in spiritual practice. But even then, this is done in a highly ritualized and meditative environment that seeks to transcend individualized notions of selfhood and the dualities of good and bad perceived through that egoistic, individualized state. Such environments quickly weed out those adopting the practice to enjoy mundane sensuality predicated on misidentifying with the ego (*ahaṅkāra*) that classical Tantra also seeks to transcend, just like all other *yoga* traditions. Much of what is being peddled and consumed under the name of Tantra in the modern West is, from the perspective of the premodern textual Tantra traditions, simply foolishness.

163. For an examination of this recondite area of philosophy, free will, and agency in various Indic philosophical traditions, including that of the Gauḍīya tradition, see Dasti and Bryant (2014).

164. There are ve types of liberation listed in Vaiṣṇava sources such as the *Bhāgavata*, one of which is *sāyūjya*, "merging," also known as *sāmyam*, the fourth type of liberation.

Sāyūjya is not, in fact, acceptable to *bhaktas*, as it does not accommodate service.

There are two types of *sāyūjya*, *brahma-sāyūjya* and *Bhagavat-sāyūjya*, described in the *Prīti-sandarbha* (*anu* 15). In *Bhagavat-sāyūjya*, the *ātman* enters into Kṛṣṇa's body and remains there, relishing the bliss of Kṛṣṇa's body, as is the case with Agha here. Jīva does not approve of either type of *sāyūjya*, as they do not accommodate service, but considers *Bhagavat-sāyūjya* the worse of the two because one is trying to enjoy *Bhagavān* rather than serve (my thanks to Satyanārāyaṇa Dāsa for this reference). On a related note, Rūpa comments that from the ve types of liberation, those of the absorbed enemy and the loving *bhakta* are not actually identical: "The

enemies of Hari usually merge into *Brahman*, but some, attaining a semblance of *sārūpya* liberation (achieving the same form as *Īśvara*), become immersed in happiness”

(*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.279). He also adds that just as the sun ray resembles the sun but is a far lesser entity, so *Brahman* resembles Kṛṣṇa but is obviously quantitatively and qualitatively far inferior (Eastern Quadrant II.278). The verses indicating that the enemies and friends of Kṛṣṇa both attain the same destination are to be understood similarly.

165. Speci cally, in this case, from the ve types mentioned in the previous note, the type of liberation Kaṁsa attained was *sārūpya,* having the same form as the Lord.

166. *Bhāgavata* VII.1.15–25; *Gītā* VII.12–13; *Yoga Sūtras* I.25.

167. After all, our notions of our universe are nothing other than the range of our awareness of it (and hence this awareness of it keeps expanding as the instruments channeling our awareness become more sophisticated).

168. According to the *Gītā* (VIII.6), whatever state of mind one is absorbed in at the moment of death conditions the next life.

169. Jīva, and indeed the *Bhāgavata* itself, frequently uses this principle of *kaimutya*: “If *x* is the case, what then to speak of *y*” (which would be much more obviously the case).

170. The Soma ritual was one of the most important Vedic rituals (even as, long before the earliest extant commentator’s Sāyaṇa’s time in the fourteenth century, no one knew exactly what plant corresponded to the *soma* mentioned in the early texts). Lower castes such as dog-eaters would not normally have been permitted near the sacred sacri cial premises in pre-*bhakti* Vedic orthopraxy.

171. See note 29 in “The Practices of *Bhakti*” on Āryan.

172. Jīva nds this verse quoted by the Vaiṣṇava theologian Madhva (verse reference not given, *anu* 320).

173. This far surpasses the *Gītā*'s statement that women, normally marginalized in mainstream Vedic ritualistic orthopraxis, and excluded in Vedāntic textual studies, could also attain the "supreme destination" (IX.32), a statement that was itself radical for the time.

174. *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* II.301–302. Reference not given.

The Practitioner of *Bhakti*, the *Bhakta*

1. There are twelve *mahājanas*, literally "great people," or exemplar *bhaktas* enumerated in the *Bhāgavata* (VI.3.20–21). Prahlāda, in this verse, is in fact behaving as an exemplar

—posing as an everyday person overwhelmed by mental defects—since his mind was actually always xed on Viṣṇu and transcendent to the base qualities he mentions here.

2. See XII.7 and XVIII.56, 58, 62.

3. See II.45, and as early as *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* (III.20).

4. See also X.33.39.

5. Compare this with *kriyā yoga* "weakening" the *kleśas*, rather than completely eradicating them (*Yoga Sūtras* II.2).

6. See *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* VI.21; *Mokṣadharma śānti parvan* 250.10 and 306.19–22; *Yoga Sūtras* I.3, III.55, and IV.34; *Gītā* II.29, IX.1–2, and XI.54.

7. *Bhagavat-tattva-vijñāna.*

8. *Daṇḍavat*, like a stick, is full prostrations on the ground, with arms extended in front full length.

9. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* II.20.

10. Jīva states that from the three sources of knowledge accepted by most schools (for example, *Yoga Sūtras* I.7; *SāŽkhya Kārikā* 4), the study of scripture removes the doubt about whether Truth can be realized; reason and argument, the doubts pertaining to opposing points of view; and personal experience, the doubt as to whether one is quali ed to realize the Truth (*anu* 16).

11. There are numerous verses in this regard: “Bondage cannot exist after seeing *sādhus*, who see everything with equanimity and whose selves are dedicated to Me [Kṛṣṇa], just as darkness cannot exist in the eyes of a person after seeing the sun” (X.10.41); and, again, “Let me always have the association of those great pure-hearted devotees, who are constantly immersed in devotion to You, O unlimited One. With this, I will become intoxicated with drinking the nectar of the narrations about You, and easily cross over the ocean of material existence, brimming with grave dangers” (IV.9.11).

12. As Prahlāda noted earlier, Nārada is another of the twelve *mahājanas*, the only twelve beings who fully understand *bhakti* (VI.3.20–22).

13. Ascetics eat one meal a day. Eating the remnants of their food, *prasādam*, is considered purifying, a re ection of the purity of saints.

14. For example, the Mīmāṁsā tradition established that one can determine the primary intention behind a text, even if it appears to contain con icting or contradictory passages, by considering six criteria of the text: its opening and closing statements; its repetition of a subject; extraordinary statements made in it; results to be attained promoted by it; its glori cation of a subject; and logical argumentation undertaken by the text to support some conclusion. Of course, as an aside, such criteria did not prevent profound di erences in interpretation and the subsequent formation of numerous Vedānta lineages, as we will see.

15. Jīva here o ers this *Bhāgavata* quote in support of those who experience spontaneous attraction: “From association with saints, realization of my power arises. These narratives of my activities become pleasing to the ears and the heart. By enjoying them, faith, love, and devotion quickly manifest consecutively on the path to liberation” (III.25.25). He contrasts this with

the limitations of study: “Neither gods nor mortals, who have beginnings and ends, understand You, O most famous Lord.

Considering this, those whose intelligence is pure abandon study of the Vedic texts”

(VII.9.49).

16. Termed *sthita-dhī*, or *sthita-prajñā*, in the second chapter of the *Gītā*.

17. Arjuna’s question in the second chapter, using the language of the Vedānta philosophical tradition, is raised again in chapter 14, using the language of Sāṅkhya, with essentially the same response reworded accordingly.

18. *Rati-rasa*.

19. See also I.18.13.

20. While this strikes us as a sexist comment in our modern day and age, as is the case with *Gītā* IX.32, we should remember that in Vedic orthopraxy, women were not allowed to study the sacred texts and could participate in Vedic rituals only in a secondary, passive role (Jamieson 1996), while laborers (*śūdras*) were barred from all such contexts. Likewise with formal lineage-embedded Vedānta study, traditionally an exclusive male preserve. *Bhakti* is thus an equalizer in gender as in social hierarchies and was socially revolutionary for its time (see *Bhāgavata* I.4.25 for an expression of this).

21. See Haberman (1994) for a premodern example of scandal in the Krishna tradition.

22. The *yamas* are listed and discussed in *Yoga Sūtras* II.30–45 as *ahiṁsā*, nonviolence; *satya*, truthfulness; *brahmacarya*, celibacy; *asteya*, nonstealing; and *aprarigraha*, noncoveting. The *niyamas* are listed as *śauca*, cleanliness; *santośa*, contentment; *tapas*, austerity; *svādhyāya*, study and *mantra* recitation; and *Īśvara-praṇidhāna*, surrender to *Īśvara*.

23. Rūpa in verse 262 here is quoting the *Skanda Purāṇa*, reference not given.

24. For a critique of the *guru* culture in a modern Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava expression, ISKCON

(the Hare Krishna Movement), see relevant articles in Bryant and Ekstrand (2004). A few simple key word searches will bring up a plethora of scandals associated with numerous *guru* gures representing Eastern spirituality in the modern period.

25. *Sama-cittāḥ*. *Gītā* II.48 de nes *yoga* itself with a form of the same adjective used here: *samatvam yogam ucyate*, *yoga* is equanimity.

26. Compare with *Yoga Sūtras* I.3.

27. Compare with *Gītā* V.8–9.

28. There are three types of *karma* accepted by the Yoga school: *sañcita*, already accumulated in the past and lying latent, awaiting its fructi cation in a future life; *sañcīyamāna*, ongoing (that is, being continuously accumulated in the present); and the type noted here, *prārabdha*. This latter category refers to *karma* that was activated at the moment of birth for this particular lifetime (the *jāti*, *āyur*, *and bhoga*, "family/species of birth, life span, and quality of life" of *Yoga Sūtras* I.13–14) and thus already set in motion. While the former two types of *karma* are annulled upon enlightenment, the *prārabdha* continues for the duration of that nal life. In the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, the analogy of the potter's wheel is used to illustrate this already activated *karma*: even when the potter takes his or her foot o the wheel, it will not immediately stop spinning owing to the kinetic energy already invested in it (LXVII).

Likewise, if a person becomes enlightened in the middle of a lifetime, the remnant of the *karma* already accrued for that lifetime will still run its course.

29. This is a reference to one of the implements Viṣṇu holds in His four arms, along with the conch shell, club, and lotus.

30. Although often associated with Buddhism, these were generic: the Buddhist *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and *Saṁyukta Āgama* acknowledge that these were followed by non-Buddhist schools (Bronkhurst 1993, 93).

31. This term was widely used by the *ātman* traditions before becoming associated in later times more exclusively with Buddhism (see, for instance, *Gītā* V.24–26 and VI.15).

32. As a point of fact, as we will discuss later, the Sāṅkhya tradition posits bliss not as an attribute of the *ātman*, but as an absence of su ering (which might appear blissful to one newly released from pain). But here, too, it is the intellect that quibbles over such things.

33. Although the *Vedānta Sūtras* limit this by noting that only *Īśvara* can create universes, the *ātman* cannot (IV.4.17); likewise, so do the *Yoga Sūtras* in the statement that *Īśvara*'s omniscience is unsurpassed (I.25). Thus, the liberated soul's omnipotency and omniscience cannot surpass that of *Īśvara*.

34. We will encounter several descriptions of these divine forms in part 2. For instance:

"These attendants have brilliant dark hues, and lotus-petal eyes. They wear yellowish garments and have extremely attractive and beautiful forms. They are e ulgent and decorated with the choicest ornaments and medallions of brilliant awless gems. Their complexions are of coral, gems, or lotus ber. They wear dazzling necklaces, crowns, and garlands." (II.6.11) 35. Jīva in *Bhakti Sandarbha anu* 234 and Rūpa in Eastern Quadrant II.55.

36. Keeping in mind here that in Vaiṣṇavism the *ātman* is an eternal part, *aṁśa*, of the whole (*Gītā* XV.7 and references from the *Vedānta Sūtras* in I.4n81).

37. As we touched upon earlier, this latter possibility was the liberation attained by some of Kṛṣṇa's enemies in the tenth book. See, for instance, X.12.33, X.74–75, and X.78.9–

38. For an example of this, see Mārkaṇḍadeva's *Śiva-jñāna-bodha* XI; and Appayya Dīkṣita's *Śivādvaita-Nirṇaya* 3.2355. See also Law and Palmer, 56.

39. *Nija-iṣṭa*.

40. Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa (2002). This section of the text recounts the travels of Gopa-Kumāra through various realms of the universe and then beyond, into the transcendent realms within *Brahman*.

41. For primary sources here, see the *Devī Gītā*, *the Devī Bhāgavata*, and the *Devī Mahātmya*; for secondary sources, Brooks (1990, 1992).

42. See *Gītā* XII.1–4, XIV.27, XV.16–20.

The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara, Bhagavān, Brahman,* and Divine Hierarchies

1. See *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* I.1. Also see *Nyāya Sūtra* I.1.9 and 22; *Vaiśeṣiká Sūtras* V.16; *Gītā*

VIII.15; and as early as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III.7.23 and IV.4.14. See Bryant 2003, 210 ., for the distribution of these four truths throughout chapter 2 of the *Yoga Sūtras*. They also occur elsewhere, including Āyurveda (there is disease, disease has a cause, there is a state free of disease, there is a means to attain this state free of disease).

2. While *duḥkham* is typically translated as su ering, it can mean any sort of mental in addition to physical su ering. I prefer to translate the term as "unful lling" since it is perhaps easier to recognize the lack of deep-level ful llment as being *sarvam*— pertaining to everything one does (when in a state of ignorance of the true self).

3. I use the term "Vedic-a liated" for schools, such as Yoga, Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, and the *bhakti* traditions, that lay claim to roots in the Upaniṣads, even though they are technically post-Vedic. I qualify the Vedic schools here because Buddhist traditions do not accept an autonomous *ātman* (with the possible exception of an early *pudgala* school). The problems with

using the alternative term “Hindu” are well-known (it is a term introduced by invaders, rather than an indigenous label—as an aside, the rst time the term surfaces in Indic sources is in the hagiography of *Śrī* Caitanya, Rūpa’s own teacher). Nonetheless, the term “Hindu” can be used for ease of reference, given its by now irretractable prevalence.

4. The *ātman* is the innermost self, pure consciousness, distinct from both the psychic overlay of mind and its gross material embodiment.

5. For easily accessible primary sources on these basic points, see *Dhammapada* (for instance, 1, 3, 16, and throughout); *Yoga Sūtras* (chapter 2, especially II.2–26); and *Gītā* (II.62–66, V.22 ., and throughout).

6. See, for example, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* II.22 and VI.13 .; *Yoga Sūtras* II.29; *Gītā* VI.27–28.

7. As in the *Gītā* (IV.1–2, XV.15), Kṛṣṇa claims to be the origin of all these paths.

8. It may sometimes also lead to a motivated type of *bhakti* that will be discussed later, such as that associated with the role of *Īśvara* in the *Yoga Sūtras* (I.23–28). See the author’s commentary on *Yoga Sūtras* I.23–24 for discussion.

9. See XV.16–20, XIV.27.

10. “Of what use are the sacred texts, austerities (*tapas*), the powers of speech, the control of mind (*citta-vṛtti*), keen intelligence, and strong senses? Of what use is the practice of *yoga*, or *sāṅkhya* (knowledge), the celibate vow of *sannyāsa*, or study of scripture and recitation of *mantra* (*svādhyāya*)? And what use are other attainments, unless they are o ered to Hari [Kṛṣṇa]?” (IV.31.11–12).

11. The term *Īśvara* is already used ve times by the *Atharva-Veda*, circa 1000 B.C.E., and has valences of lordship in the oldest texts. See Shastri (1935) for a history of the term with relation to theism.

12. From the classical schools of philosophy, the Mīmāṁsā school rejects the inferential necessity of positing an *Īśvara*. Sāṅkhya is typically (and hastily) assumed to be nontheistic, as the later *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* does not mention *Īśvara* (an assumption that can be brought into question—see, for instance, Edgerton 1924). But there were many schools of Sāṅkhya, most of which, preserved in the Purāṇas and *Mokṣadharma* section of the *Mahābhārata*, were in fact theistic (although the much later *Sāṅkhya Sūtra* is more explicitly nontheistic). There were thus both theistic and nontheistic Sāṅkhya strains, with—I would argue as others have done—the majority theistic.

13. See also *Bhāgavata* I.2.36 and III.24.32.

14. The *d* and *ta* endings on these two texts, respectively, re ect Sanskrit grammatical endings of the term *Bhagavān*, which is in the masculine, nominative case of the stem *bhagavat* (grammatically *bhaga* + *vat* possessive su x = literally "one who possesses qualities"). *Bhaga* is an old Vedic term, used to refer to the share apportioned to the various gods in the Vedic *yajña*, sacri ce. By the Purāṇas, it becomes coupled with the possessive su x and denotes the superexcellent qualities of a transcendent Being.

15. The terms can even, on occasion, be used guratively for a powerful person (such as a sage like Nārada).

16. The term has earlier Vedic roots associated with the power of the sacri ce. The root is *bṛh*, to grow, increase, expand.

17. See, for example, *Kena Upaniṣad* I.1–6.

18. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II.3.1–2. Since "being" is a present active participle (of the root *as*)—that is, a never-ending ongoing state— *sat* is often translated as "eternal."

19. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4.3.32; *Chāndogya* VI.2.1; *Taittirīya* II.2.1 and II.8; *Muṇḍaka* II.1.7.

Also, as a technical aside, *advaita Vedānta*, in its radical nondualism, would not speak of the "qualities" of *Brahman*, as this implies a duality between qualities (*dharmas/guṇas*) and quality bearers (such as substances, *dharmins/guṇins/dravyas*).

For this school, the inherent nature of *Brahman* is itself *sat-cit-ānanda*; it has no qualities.

20. See, for example, *Muṇḍaka* I.6–7.

21. See, for example, *Taittirīya* II.6; *Aitareya* I.1 .; *Śvetāśvatara* I.8 .

22. We will provide examples below.

23. Such schools point to verses such as the famous *sātmātattvam asi*, "you are that *ātman*,"

series of verses in the *Chāndogya* (VI.9 .) and *Kaṭha*, "from death to death he goes, who sees here any kind of diversity" (IV.10–11; repeated from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* IV.4.19; these and translations in next note from Olivelle 1996).

24. Verses favored by such schools point to the *Śvetāśvatara*, such as I.6 and 9. Rāmānuja frequently quotes verses such as "The self of yours who is present within but is di erent from all beings, whom all beings do not know, whose body is all beings, and who controls all beings from within—he is the inner controller [*antaryāmin*], the immortal" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* III.7.21); "He had this desire, 'Let me multiply myself, let me produce o spring'" (*Taittirīya* II.6); and "It thought to itself, 'Let me become many'" (*Chāndogya* VI.2.3).

25. This can be readily seen by the *ṭilak*, sacred clay forehead marking, on pictures of Krishnamacarya, as well as on early photos of Iyengar, which denotes the school of *Śrī*

Vaiṣṇavism, the formal name of Rāmānuja's lineage (the philosophical name is *viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*). I personally asked Iyengar, on his last tour to the West, whether he still identi ed with Rāmānuja's Vedānta lineage, *Śrī*

Vaiṣṇavism, and whether he considered *Īśvara* to be Nārāyaṇa/Viṣṇu, as per the very speci c theology of this lineage. He immediately and unambiguously replied in the a rmative. Since I was receiving a lot of requests to conduct *yoga* philosophy workshops in Iyengar *yoga* communities, I then asked him whether he wished for me to teach his students the *viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* position (which will be discussed later in this section) on fundamental Vedānta issues pertaining to *Iśvara*, *Brahman*, the *ātman*, and *bhakti*. He replied in the a rmative, then added that I should also teach them Śaṅkara's *advaita Vedānta* and all di erent points of view (personal communication in the Harvard Faculty Club, 2005). I very much appreciated this response.

26. This is especially central to the later Upaniṣads such as the *Śvetāsvatāra*, but emerging already in the earlier ones, too.

27. This is called *āgama*, as in *Yoga Sūtras* I.7, or, more commonly, *śabda* or *śruti/smṛti* (or just *śāstra*, as in *Vedānta Sūtras* I.I.3). Vedānta also employs reason and arguments secondarily, which occupy the second of the four chapters of the *Vedānta Sūtras*.

28. See *Yoga Sūtras* I.7 for a discussion of the three modes of gaining right knowledge according to Yoga, including *anumāṇa* and *āgama*. For an excellent overview of Nyāya theism in both primary and secondary sources, see Dāsti (2010) and references therein, and Patil (2009).

29. For primary sources, see *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *ādi līlā*, chapter 10, and *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, *ādi khaṇḍa*, chapter 13; for secondary sources, see Ganeri (2011, chapter 4).

30. *Yoga Sūtras* I.24; *Gītā* 15.17.

31. This would be the Vaiṣṇava reading of, for example, *Gītā* XIV.27.

32. See I.4.20–22.

33. Or, with the Vedāntin Madhva (and also the Nyāya school), *Īśvara* is at least accepted as the overseer, sustainer, and support of *prakṛti*, which is not created but coeternal with Him.

34. As with the cluster of Yoga traditions, there were numerous variants of Sāṅkhya, amply attested to in the *Mahābhārata* epic (the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsöen Tsang's disciple in the seventh century C.E. reports eighteen schools, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also refers to several). Only fragments quoted by other authors have survived from the works of the original teachers of the system. The later *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, which scholars assign to the fourth to fth century C.E., has by default become the seminal text of the tradition, just as Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* has become for the Yoga tradition, and represents its more developed, systematic form.

35. *Prakṛti* has been called "the undi erentiated plenitude of being" (Larson 1979, 167).

36. *Sat-tva* literally means "being-ness," from the root *as*, "to be." *Rajas* is from the root *rañj*, "to color" or to "redden." *Tamas* is from the root *tam*, "to choke, block, or stop."

37. Without *rajas*, for example, one could not even blink one's eyes, and without *tamas*, there would be no sleep or rest.

38. When the *guṇas* maintain what we might call an "equi-tension," *prakṛti* remains in a precreative state of dynamic potential called *avyakta.* Once the equilibrium is disrupted, however, creation takes place.

39. The analogy of milk holds good only in terms of the evolution of by-products. Where *prakṛti* di ers from milk is that it and its evolutes maintain their own separate identities while simultaneously producing further evolutes, unlike milk, which is itself fully transformed when producing yogurt.

40. I have speci ed the Vedānta and Purāṇa traditions, as there are always exceptions to categories and terminologies: Nyāya, for example, would accept an eternal, primary, and nonderivatory *Īśvara*, but the earlier tradition would likely not use the term "personal" to depict Him. For this tradition, *Īśvara* as the nonreducible "individual"

ātman who di ers from other *ātmans* in being an omniscient Overseer would be a better way to demarcate this tradition from the monist understanding

(although later Naiyāyikas were Śaivite and thus “personalists” in the sense I am using the term here).

41. We de ne “monotheism” here as one personal and transcendent God as supreme cause.

42. In his commentary of *Yoga Sūtras* I.24, the commentator Vyāsa, in support of one Supreme *Īśvara*, quips that if the various manifestations of *Īśvaras* were all exactly equal, and one says of an object “Let it be old” and the other says “Let it be new,” the wishes of one of them will be thwarted (which would contradict the de nition of *Īśvara*). And if their wishes never contradict, adds the commentator Vācaspati Miśra, then what is the point of having more than one *Īśvara* in the rst place?!

43. Śaṅkara’s *Upadeśasāhaśrī* is an excellent place to encounter accessible *advaita* teachings from its most famous exponent, all the more since it is a text attributed to Śaṅkara’s own composition, in contrast with his other writings, which are commentaries on other preexisting Vedānta texts. For good secondary sources, see Deutsch (1969, 1971).

44. For the enlightened state while still embodied (*jīvan-mukta*) in Śaṅkara, see Fort (1996).

45. The twelfth-century commentator Madhva is a partial (and somewhat technical) exception here. Madhva does not accept *Īśvara* as the creator of *prakṛti*, although he accepts Him as the sustainer and support of both matter and the pluralist individual souls. Madhva’s philosophy is one of dualism, *dvaita*, where, along the lines of the Nyāya school, God, the souls, and matter are all eternal coexistents (rather than the latter being emanational from the former). Nonetheless, *Īśvara* is unambiguously the Supreme Controller and Overseer in his very robust form of monotheism. See Sharma (1971) and Buchta (2013).

46. For good secondary sources on Rāmānuja, see Clooney (2007), Carmen (1974), Lipner (1986), and Cari (1998). For primary sources other than his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* (the Śrī Bhāṣya) and *Gītā*, see Rāmānuja’s *Vedārtha Saṅgraha.*

47. I thank Matthew Dasti for this conceptualization.

48. It is in fact listed in Mādhava's fourteenth-century doxography, the *Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha* (see Nicholson 2010, 148 ., for discussion on the Sanskrit doxographies).

49. While the notion of "six schools" surfaces frequently in the doxographies across the centuries, di erent schools were identi ed as comprising these six, or more than six were recognized. Additionally, sometimes the schools were di erentiated di erently— for instance, Yoga was not deemed separate from Sāṇkhya until later times. See Nicholson (2014) for discussion.

50. Glimpses of Śākta metaphysics can be read into the Upaniṣads, which these traditions—

like all others—can then point to as their roots. All Vedic traditions needed to legitimate themselves by somehow or other locating themselves in the Ś *ruti*, as we will nd in appendix 1 with Jīva himself. From this vantage point, later traditions could then claim to be the "real" or "hidden" or "higher" teachings of the Ś *ruti*. The *mokṣadharma* section of the *Mahabhārata*, which predated the Common Era, and various Purāṇas contain more explicit Śakta references, so these currents are ancient.

And, of course, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (circa fourth century B.C.E.), despite being frequently quoted by Vaiṣṇava theologians owing to its dualistic and theistic orientations, is explicitly Śaivite.

51. For excellent sources on Kaśmir Śaivism, see Muller-Ortega (1989), Lawrence (1999), and Dyczkowski (1987).

52. As noted earlier, so uncompromising is this form of *advaita* that even *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* are considered not "qualities" of *Brahman*, but its essence. A quality requires a quality bearer, or substance, in which the quality resides, hence creating a dualism between the quality and that in which it adheres. No such semblance of dualism or di erentiation in *Brahman* is accepted by classical *advaita*.

53. Rāmānuja never mentions the *Bhāgavata*, prioritizing rather the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. We resist the proposal that this omission suggests that the *Bhāgavata* must have been written after Rāmānuja's time in the twelfth century. We prefer to see this as a theological neglect stemming from, precisely, discomfort with the *Bhāgavata*'s prioritization of Kṛṣṇa over Viṣṇu.

54. The Gauḍīya lineage traces its own pedigree (but not without contestation) to Madhva.

This connection is not recognized by the orthodox Madhva tradition, however (see De 1986, 13 .).

55. As in English negations like theist/atheist, an *a-* pre x negates the noun to which it is attached.

56. Where Rāmānuja tends to agree with Śaṅkara at least regarding the identi cation of the source Upaniṣadic text being referred to in any particular Vedānta *sūtra*, Madhva frequently identi es completely di erent source texts, even as his philosophy is very much closer to the former than the latter. See Adams (1993) for a comparative analysis of these three pivotal thinkers on the rst chapter of the *Vedānta Sūtras*.

57. We take this usage from Dasgupta (1922, 246).

58. Madhva's ontology draws heavily from Nyāya categories.

59. The Nimbarka tradition has a commentary and calls its philosophy *dvaita-advaita*; Vallabha, a contemporary of Caitanya, did likewise for his *śuddha-advaita* philosophy; and most recently, the followers of the eighteenth-century Swami Nārāyaṇa tradition have just completed a commentary for the philosophy of their lineage, called *navya-viśiṣṭa-advaita.*

60. This trans-human status is irrespective of whether, as with Nyāya and the theistic traditions, the texts are authored and bestowed by *Īśvara* at the beginning of creation or, as with the nontheistic Mīmāṁsā school, the texts are authorless but nonetheless eternal.

61. Part of the Vedānta project, as an important aside, is to prove that the overarching primary subject matter of the Upaniṣads ultimately relates to *Brahman* rather than some other topic (I.3).

62. Like the *Yoga Sūtras*, many *sūtras* consist of only three or four words. They rarely indicate to which passage, section, or phrase in the Upaniṣads they refer and thus are completely inaccessible without commentary.

63. Precise labels are slightly problematic here since Śaṅkara could, in point of fact, be considered a type of Vaiṣṇava (even as some narratives place him as an incarnation of Śiva), but along the lines noted above—in other words, he accepted in terms of conventional reality that the creator is Viṣṇu (in, for instance, his *Gītā* commentary), but that in ultimate reality both creation and creator are products of ignorance (see Nelson 2007 for an excellent discussion here). Moreover, since Rāmānuja's Vedānta school is called *viśiṣṭa-advaita*, "quali ed nondualism," it has retained the term *advaita*, since everything is an expression of the one *Brahman*, but quali ed it by positing di erences within it, *viśiṣṭa*, along the lines noted previously. The terms "personalist" and "nonpersonalist" have similar sorts of problems.

64. This divisioning is seen in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Saṅkara's *param-guru*, Gauḍapāda, was either a Buddhist or heavily in uenced by Buddhism (for discussion, see King 1995).

65. The standard primary Vedānta texts—the *prasthāna traya*, threefold corpus—consist of the Upaniṣads, the *Vedānta Sūtras*, and the *Gītā*.

66. The *Padma Purāṇa* states: "When *Īśvara* is described as *nirguṇa*, without qualities, what is meant is an absence of the *guṇas* connected with *prakṛti* like inferior objects"

(*uttara-khaṇḍa* 255.39–40).

67. There are much less fundamental but still important variations, too, within post-Śaṅkara expresssions of *advaita*, as among the Vaiṣṇava schools (see Karl H. Potter, ed., *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 11: "Advaita Vedanta from 800 to 1200: From Vacaspati Misra to Citsuka." [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006]).

68. The Swami Nārāyaṇa tradition, originating in Gujarat in the eighteenth century, has, at the time of this writing, recently completed its own commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* (Ahmedabad: Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2009). This school calls its philosophy *navya-viśiṣṭa-advaita*, a "new" variant of Rāmānuja's philosophy (indeed, their monks are often trained in philosophy and logic by *viśiṣṭādvaita* Vaiṣṇava theologians).

69. Nyāya (the school of logicians) argues vigorously contra *advaita Vedānta* for both the *ātman* and *Īśvara* as eternally independent and individual "reals" (which they term *padārthas*, things that can be named because of having inherent existence), and as discussed, even the monistic Kaśmir Śaivite tradition rejects Śaṅkara's illusionism when it comes to the world of forms, which they hold to be real *citi-śakti*.

70. There are 150 dense pages in Thibaut's translation (1904). Madhva also vigorously opposed Śaṅkara, as did the great *bhakta* scholar and theologian Vallabha, a contemporary of Caitanya.

71. We can brie y touch upon one commonly encountered argument Jīva raises against the *advaita* position (so as not to burden here those less interested in Vedānta argumentation), in order to give a avoring of this issue through Vaiṣṇava theological sensitivities. The rst argument he introduces against the *advaita* position in his *Bhakti Sandarbha* is the most commonly encountered in anti- *advaita* argumentation and, as with so much else, can be traced back at least to the twelfth-century Vedānta theologian Rāmānuja. If it is true, as *advaita* holds, that there is in ultimate reality (*paramārthika*) only one undivided *Brahman*, whose nature is *cit*, pure consciousness, but that owing to *māyā/avidyā* (ignorance), the *ātman* is erroneously perceived as di erent from it, when in fact it is nothing other than that same *Brahman*, then this is tantamount to suggesting that *Brahman* can fall under the in uence of illusion. As Rāmānuja puts it: *"Kasyā avidyā,"* Whose is this ignorance? Where is its locus? Is ignorance somehow covering *Brahman*? This is constitutionally impossible, as *Brahman*'s very nature is *cit*, full awareness: it can never be unaware or subject to ignorance, any more than the sun can be unilluminated. So ignorance cannot exist in *Brahman*. But nor can it be located outside of *Brahman*, as that creates a situation of *dvaita*, duality (two distinct entities), which contradicts the nonnegotiable

tenet of *advaita*— absolute nonduality. Nor can it be covering the individual *ātman* since the *ātman*'s individuality is itself caused by ignorance, hence this ignorance must have existed prior to its e ect of individualization. Besides, for *advaita* metaphysics, ignorance cannot be within a part of *Brahman* of any sort, for the same reason— *Brahman* has no parts, once again, because, ex hypothesi, it must only be nondual. In fact, says Jīva, the latter possibility is actually the only coherent one: there must be some sort of di erence between the part of *Brahman* under the spell of *māyā*—namely, the *jīva*—and the part of *Brahman* that can never be reduced to this condition but is, in fact, the wielder of ignorance (*māyā*)—namely, *Īśvara* (*Tattva Sandarbha anu* 35– 40).The basic *advaita* response to this dilemma (and the issue has been treated di erently through the history of the tradition) is that an explanation of ignorance is beyond human comprehension (*anirvācanīya*). To be fair, the Gauḍīya Vedāntins do not hesitate to resort to a similar position of inconceivability (*acintya*) when discussing their own ontology. So all this points to the obvious limitations of the human intellect in capturing Truths that, by the de nition of all Vedantins (and all *mokṣa* traditions), lie completely beyond it. Nonetheless, the debate remains an indispensable polemical mainstay of the various Vedānta communities to this day, since clearly, for Vaiṣṇavas, *bhakti yoga* requires an eternal *Īśvara* in devotional relationship with an *ātman* that is quantitatively distinct on the one hand, even as it is qualitatively the same on another (that is, also comprising *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*). Hence the perennial e ort invested in relentlessly marshaling exegetical and philosophical methods in defense of these Truths.

72. *Bhajana*, in addition to its meaning discussed in the *kīrtana* section, is sometimes more broadly used as another term for *bhakti* practice.

73. For the *Bhāgavata*, nonduality indicates that everything emanates from *Bhagavān*—

nothing has separate or independent existence. *Advaya* is a synonym of *advaita* but

understood by the Vaiṣṇavas very di erently from Śaṅkara.

74. *Paramātman*, Supreme *Ātmān*, is another term understood variously in the Vedānta schools. For the *Bhāgavata* and Vaiṣnava traditions, it generally refers to derivative forms of Viṣṇu involved in various levels of overlordship in the matter of creation (see I.6.29), as well as the form that manifests to *yogīs*. Rūpa quotes a verse from the *Skanda Purāṇa* stating that "*Bhagavān* is called *Paramātman* by the followers of the eight-limbed *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga*), *Brahman* by those who follow the Upaniṣads, and *jñāna* by the *jñāna-yogis*" (*Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta* I.196, reference not given; for a rearticulation of this verse, see *Bhāgavata* III.32.26).

75. See, for example, Rūpa in yet another of his publications: *Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta* (V.216).

76. Nyāya is an exception, here, positing that the *ātman* has consciousness as a quality, but that this quality is instantiated and manifest only when the *ātman* is coupled with a mind but remains latent when the *ātman* is liberated and uncoupled from the mind.

Hence liberation for Nyāya (and its sister school, Vaiśeṣiká) is a not a state of pure consciousness.

77. Indeed, Sheridan (1983) reads an "*advaitic* theism" in this text. See also Bhattacarya (1960–62), Vyasa (1974), and Rukmani (1970) for other studies on the text's philosophy.

78. *Paramātman* in Vaiṣṇavism is the immanent aspect of the personal Absolute consciously active within His own power of *māya- śakti*, the material world of *prakṛti* and the *guṇas*. It is God as regulator of the universe and the selves within it. Speci cally, it refers to the various Viṣṇu forms. For example, there is the Mahā-Viṣṇu (Kāraṇodakaṣayī), from whose pores unlimited parallel universes emanate (X.14.11, X.88.41). Unlimited derivative Viṣṇus are manifest from that Mahā-Viṣṇu and enter into each individual universe (the Kṣīrodakaśayī Viṣṇus), and it is from the navels of these Viṣṇus that the lotus grows upon which Brahmā, the secondary creator, nds himself (as we will encounter in the Tale and Teachings of Lord Brahmā). There is a further tertiary Viṣṇu who then enters into the hearts of all beings, as well as into every atom, the

Paramātman or *Antaryāmin*. This ontology, derived from the *Pāñcarātrika* tradition, is outlined in various sources such as the *Paramātma Sandarbha*.

79. See also *Gītā* XIV.27 and VII.4–7 .

80. *Draṣṭuḥ svarūpe 'vasthānam*, the seer abides in its own nature (*Yoga Sūtras* I.3), which is just pure consciousness (II.20).

81. *Aṁśa*, "part," in *Gītā* XV.7 and *Vedānta Sūtras* II.3.43; *bheda*, "di erence," in *Vedānta Sūtras* I.1.17 and 21, I.2.20; and *viśeṣana*, "distinction," in *Vedānta Sūtras* I.20.22.

82. Written *Puruṣottama* for syntactical reasons.

83. Like the obtainment of an M.Phil. for one pursuing a Ph.D.!

84. Written *Paramātman*.

85. See, for a parallel discussion, the commentaries on the *vitārkas*, the unwanted impulses contrary to the *yamas* and *niyamas*, in *Yoga Sūtras* II.33–34.

86. Nyāya posits the liberated state as one free of su ering, rather than a more positive state of actual bliss.

87. Hence, "the poet-sages always engage in great ecstasy in *bhakti* for *Bhagavān* Vāsudeva, which satis es the mind" (I.2.22).

88. *Draṣṭuḥ svarūpe 'vasthānam* (*Yoga Sūtras* I.3). The fth limb of *yoga*, *pratyāhāra*, is precisely to withdraw consciousness from the senses and all sense objects, and the remaining three limbs of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* to totally still the mind (*Yoga Sūtras* II.49, III.1–3).

89. See VII.8.42, X.16.37, X.87.21, XI.20.34, XI.14.14, and XII.10.6.

90. See III.4.15, III.25.34, III.29.13, V.14.44, VI.18.74, and IX.4.67.

91. See IV.9.10, IV.20.24, VI.18.74, and VII.6.25.

92. See VI.11.25.

93. The commentator Viśvanātha states here that if one's *bhakti* is not strong, one will become distracted by the mystic powers accruing from *yoga*. Like the *Yoga Sūtras* (III.37), the *Bhāgavata* considers such powers useless (XI.15.33), for reasons that should be obvious by now.

94. Although thinkers such as Madhva held that the Vedic gods were originally attributes of Viṣṇu, who became rei ed in their own right only after the degeneration of the ages (Madhva wrote a commentary on certain verses of the *Ṛg-Veda*). Dayānanda of the Arya Samaj was to argue something similar in much later times.

95. *Śivarātrī* has various stories associated with it.

96. Sectarian lineages are known as *saṁpradāya* or *paramparā* (for instance, see *Gītā* IV.2).

97. Sacred text is also called *āgama* (for example, in *Yoga Sūtras* I.7).

98. For instance, placing a *tulasī* leaf on all food o ered to the Deity in Vaiṣṇavism.

99. The *Dina-Candrikā* was the last book published by Hari Dāsa Śāstrī, a proli c scholar and author, before he passed away in 2013 (Vṛndāvan: Śri Gadādhara Gaurhari Press, n.d.).

100. This term is not typically used for Lakṣmī but is employed here as a play on words to parallel Śiva's consort Umā with a view to emphasize the near identicality even in nomenclature of these *Īśvaras* and *Īśvarīs*.

101. It is for these sorts of reasons that the eighteenth-century Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa wrote a commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* on behalf of the Gauḍīya tradition.

Without this, no emerging school claiming to be representing the true teachings of the Vedas or Vedānta can be considered authoritatively grounded in the old *Śruti* (Vedic) texts (we have noted this is an ongoing expectation, with the Swami Nārāyaṇa tradition's most recent addition to the commentarial tradition).

102. See *Yoga Sūtras* I.7; *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* IV.

103. Despite the usually poorly informed references to the so-called Hindu trinity, Brahmā, the (nominal) third *Īśvara*, is a mortal being and so is never a genuine contender for the role of supreme transcendent *Īśvara*, as we will see from his tale within. Although there are Purāṇa stories where the three compete, the playful competition in the Purāṇas is between Viṣṇu and Śiva, which is resolved according to the sectarian nature of the di erent lineages. Brahmā, if he competes, as in the Atri story mentioned above, is merely a placeholder (see *Bhāgavata* X.89.1–20).

104. While these traditions are "later" in terms of the compositions of their textual traditions, in fact it is impossible to tell how old some of the stories they contain are or if they may have existed orally (especially if they did not feel compelled to engage in orthodox Vedic rituals or Vedāntic

exegesis). In all probability they coexisted with the ancient Vedic corpus. See the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Devī Māhātmyā*, or *Devī Gītā*

as important “later” texts in the Goddess tradition.

105. For example, we have discussed how Śaiva schools follow similar bifurcations between, for instance, Kaśmir Śaiva and Śaiva Siddhānta expressions, as to whether the form of Śiva is ultimate and supreme or derived from a higher transpersonal Truth. Likewise, there are Vaiṣṇava Śākta traditions as well as Vaiṣṇava *advaita* adherents; and one can nd Śaivite Vedāntins and the like. This can all be seen as re ecting the in nite and unlimited potentiality of the Divine from the Purāṇic perspective.

106. We need not concern ourselves with the Purāṇic references associated with Brahmā, which are considered of the nature of *rajas*, for reasons o ered in note 103.

107. There are some di erences among Purāṇa lists as to which Purāṇas constitute the eighteen.

108. Brahmā is associated with its creation, a quality of *rajas*, but as we have noted, he is a mortal being and not in the same category as Viṣṇu and Śiva.

109. As we will see, the *Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas* associate Śiva and Brahmā with religiosity that seeks material gain (or, at best, spiritual gain mixed with materialism, as in I.2.26–27, quoted later). Hence the statement here that the ultimate good—which was established in the opening verses of the *Bhāgavata* as being free of any such motives (I.1.2 and note)—is attainable only from Viṣṇu.

110. Vedic religiosity involves a highly elaborate, technical, and expansive set of rituals, for which re, as consumer of the oblations, is central. The metaphor indicates that re—as actual consumer of the o erings and a form of the god Agni—is more important than wood or smoke, even as these are intertwined and inseperable.

111. We reiterate that for the Vaiṣṇava traditions, Viṣṇu's form is made not of *prakṛti*, but of *Brahman*, the *viśuddha sattva* noted here.

112. The *Harivaṁśa* is another extensive account of Kṛṣṇa's life, added as an appendage to the *Mahābhārata* epic and generally taken by scholars to be an older rendition.

113. In the *Mahābhārata*, *Harivaṁśa*, and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, there is no doubt that Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The roles, for the most part, have been somewhat reversed in the *Bhāgavata*: while there are abundant passages in the text that relate to Viṣṇu without explicitly subordinating him to Kṛṣṇa, particularly in the books prior to the tenth, the general thrust of the tenth book, which takes up a quarter of the entire twelve books of the Purāṇa, prioritizes Kṛṣṇa. The *Gītā* can also be read as prioritizing Kṛṣṇa (see VII.6–7, X.8) but is obviously not viewed this way by Rāmānuja and Madhva.

114. Rūpa identi es four aspects unique to Kṛṣṇa that are not manifest in any other *Īśvara* form: "His *līla*, the unsurpassed love of His devotees, the sweetness of His ute, and His beauty" (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Southern Quadrant 1.43).

115. See, for discussion, Sheth (1982).

116. *Mahāvākyas* are especially associated with Śaṅkara and the *advaita* tradition, for whom *tattvam-asi* ("you are that [*ātman*]," *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI.9–11) is the best known among four prominent in that tradition. Rāmānuja also has his equivalents of the *mahāvākyas*, such as "In the beginning, son, this world was simply what is existent —one only, without a second … and it thought to itself: 'Let me become many.'"

(*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI.2.1–3; Lipner 1986, 82). See Goswami (2012) for a discussion about *Kṛṣṇas-tu Bhagavān svayam* as a parallel *mahāvākya* of the *Bhāgavata* and its derivative traditions.

117. This is a reference to *parama-Śiva*, the ultimate expression of Truth in Śaivite theology.

118. The text reminds us constantly that “Brahmā, Śiva … the Goddess of Fortune, Śrī, are only a fraction of a fraction of Him [Kṛṣṇa]” (X.68.37). Śiva discloses to his consort Parvatī that it is upon Viṣṇu that He meditated when He engaged in *yoga* for one thousand years (VIII.12.43–44). See also Śiva’s eulogy of Viṣṇu’s supremacy after being bewildered by the latter’s female incarnation of Mohinī (VIII.12.4–13). *Śaiva Purāṇas* claim the same for Śiva, as we will see below.

119. Since *bhūta* can refer to “ghosts” (literally “one who has gone”), Jīva mentions Bhairava here, a particular form of Śiva that is the Lord of ghosts and other a icted beings.

120. We can also mention here, from the *Bhāgavata*, Sudakṣiṇa (X.66.27 .) and Saubha (X.76). Likewise, the story of Hiraṇyakaśipu, who attained near invincibility from the worship of Brahmā, is an important narrative of the *Bhāgavata* that we will encounter in part 2.

121. There are exceptions to just about everything in the Purāṇas!

122. The text adds here: “He is ego in its three divisions of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The transformations from this have resulted in the sixteen ingredients of the world.”

123. See I.12.23, IV.4.15, and X.76.5.

124. “Who see all beings in the *ātman*.”

125. However, it can be inferred from the Agha story in part 3 that one variant of *sāyūjya* involves an actual merging into Kṛṣṇa’s body, which would entail, to all intents and purposes, becoming one with Viṣṇu (not a spiritual clone, so to speak, as is the case with *sārūpya*). This state is called *ātmasāmya* in X.12.38.

126. See Valaveetil (1996) for a brief discussion on this.

127. Consider, for example, this passage from the *Rūdrasaṃhitā* of the *Śiva Purāṇa*: “Śiva thought within Himself like this: ‘Another being shall be created by Me. Let him create everything, protect it, and in the end let him

dissolve it with My blessing. Having entrusted everything to him, we two [Śiva and Śakti] … shall roam as we please, keeping only the prerogative of conferring salvation. We can stay happily … free from worries.…' Thereupon [after Śiva churns the ocean of His mind] a person came into being who was the most charming one in the three worlds, who was calm with Sattva Guṇa being prominent, and who appeared to be the ocean of immeasurable majesty.…

He bowed to Śiva Parameśvara and said: 'O Lord, give me names and assign me my task.' On hearing it, Lord Śiva laughed. With words thunderlike in resonance, Lord Śiva addressed the person thus. Śiva said: 'You will be famous as Viṣṇu by name as you are all-pervasive. You will have many other names conferring happiness on devotees'" (6.33–43). Interestingly, Viṣṇu's association with *sattva* and his creatorship and dominion over everything are retained in this story but reworked into a very di erent relationship with Śiva. See also *Śiva Purāṇa*, *Vāyavīyasaṃhitā* 13.11–47. The most widely recounted story associated with Śiva's supremacy is the famous narrative where Viṣṇu (and Brahmā) is not able to nd the limits of Śiva's *liṅga* (uniconic) form: *Śiva Purāṇa*, *Rudrasaṃhitā* 7–9; *Liṅga Purāṇa* I.17–19; *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Uttarārdha* 9–14.

See also *Śiva Purāṇa*, *Vidyeśvarasaṃhitā* 5.28–29. Elsewhere, this text expresses an interesting arrangement whereby all three Lords get to be progenitors of the other two in di erent ages, albeit always as derivative entities born of the great Śiva (*Vāyavīyasaṃhitā* 13.2–26). All Puraṇas quoted here from the Motilal Banarsidass edition.

128. For an example from the Devī tradition, see the *Devī Gītā* I.14 . and the *Devī*

Bhāgavata Purāṇa 7.29.23–30.

129. See, for instance, *Gītā* II.62–62 and III.37; *Yoga Sūtras* II.12; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* VI.14–15; *Mokṣadharma, Śānti Parvan* 251.7. Consider also the Second Noble Truth of Buddhism, the cause of su ering (that is, desire).

130. With some quali cations, in certain Tantra traditions it is not desire that must be renounced, since *prakṛti* is *citi-śākti*, the power of consciousness,

and thus (for instance, in Kaśmir Śaivism) nondi erent from Śiva and therefore divine, not a negative entity to be renounced. So it is not the desire to enjoy *prakṛti*, but the illusion of enjoying as an entity imagined to be separate from Śiva that must be relinquished.

Once that ignorance is removed, and one realizes one's own Śiva nature, then one can enjoy *śākti*. Nonetheless, the schools of right-handed Tantra do follow *yama* equivalents.

131. The *devas*, by the time of the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata*, are depicted as beings in *saṁsāra* who, because of inordinately good *karma*, have attained highly *sāttvic* forms in celestial realms. However, they too reattain a human birth once this good *karma* has expired (*Gītā* VIII.10).

132. In fact, the *Gītā'* s comments pertaining to the Vedic texts parallels the discussion above of the *Bhāgavata*'s perception of other Purāṇas: "The subject of the Vedas is the three *guṇas*. Become free of the *guṇas*, Arjuna. Be situated always in *sattva*…" (II.45).

133. See also *Gītā* IX.23–24 and X.20–42.

Concluding Re ections

1. John in a vision saw God seated upon His throne (Revelation 4:1–3), and Daniel had a similar vision (Daniel 7:9–10), as did Isaiah (6:1–5). Similarly, we are told that Moses, Aaron, his sons, and the elders of Israel "saw the God of Israel" (Exodus 24:9–11). And Moses was permitted to see the back (but not the face) of God (Exodus 33:18–23). See also Ezekiel 1.40.2. See Williams (2009) for discussion and references to transcendent anthropomorphism in the Semitic traditions.

2. Colossians 1:15 and Timothy 1:17 indicate that God is invisible.

3. Certain sages recount how, despite performing intense austerities, when they arrived at Nārāyaṇa's abode within the universe called Śvetadvīpa in the hope of seeing the Supreme Being, they were blinded by His e ulgence. Other great souls who resided there, however, were able to see Nārāyaṇa.

4. Thus, etymologically, the name Jupiter is cognate with Zeus pater and, in Sanskrit, Dyaus *pitṛ*. And functionally, Thor, Zeus, and Indra are all leaders of the other celestials, associated with rain, thunder, and lightning, and have a weapon that they hurl.

5. As is well-known, aspects of the old pre-Christian traditions are absorbed into Christianity (such as the appropriation of the birthday of Mithras on December 25).

6. Various texts speak of the *devas* as having forms made of expressions of *prakṛti* other than the gross matter of this realm, such as *tanmātra* (see Bryant 2009, 74, for references; the inhabitants of Śvetadvīpa mentioned in note 3 are one such example).

7. When compared with the sword-bearing archangel Gabriel, the warrior nature of the *gandharvas* enhances the comparison.

8. Of course, *Īśvara* is simultaneously also immanent given that *prakṛti* and the *ātmans* are a part of His manifestation and therefore nondi erent from Him.

9. Actually, in Gauḍīya theology there are unlimited Vaikuṇṭha realms, as God has unlimited manifestations.

10. The exception to this is the early Vedic religion as expressed in the four Vedas, at least as construed by academic Indological methods. There is no transcendent supreme deity explicitly revealed there, but rather a situation much closer to the other Indo-European pantheons, where, at best, we nd a martial chieftain prominent in the form of Indra (performing the functional parallel role of Zeus or Thor) among ontologically equal celestials. Traditional Hindu theologians have reworked this potential problem in di erent ways. The thirteenth-century Vaiṣṇava theologian Madhva, for example, who wrote a commentary on forty hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda*, argued that these gods originally represented the various powers of the transcendent Viṣṇu that came to be considered separate autonomous entities only in later, more spiritually decadent times. Other revisionist reworkings can be found in nineteenth-to twentieth-century monotheistic exegeses of

the Vedas by prominent Hindu apologists such as Dayananda and Aurobindo.

11. *Bhāgavata* I.4.14.

12. We resist the usual translation for *avatāra* as "incarnation" (etymologically, "to enter esh"), since Vaiṣṇava theology holds that Kṛṣṇa descends in this *Brahman* (pure consciousness) body and not one made of matter (see Lipner 1976 for a discussion in Rāmānuja's lineage).

13. See, for example, from the most seminal thinkers, Freud as the externalization of subconscious forces; Durkheim as social forces; Tyler as primitive science; Weber as economic forces; Marx as related to the control of the modes of production; and others.

14. For instance, Max Muller, Mircea Eliade, the Theosophists, and other shades of perennialist thinkers.

15. For a good start on the construction of the category of religion triggered by the early European encounter with the non-Western world, see Halbfass (1988), King (1999), Masuzawa (2005), Oddie (2006), Pennington (2005), and Balagangadhara (2012).

16. There are a number of instances of this throughout the text, such as the *Virāṭ- rūpa* material form in the second book, which is explicitly described as being meditative rather than factual.

17. The *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* in, for instance, *Yoga Sūtras* I.7.

18. The prioritizing of empiricism and reason is most noteworthy in the Cārvāka, Nyāya, and Buddhist traditions, but most schools incorporated rich intellectual argumentation into their theologies, and almost all in one way or another accepted the paramount nature of empiricism as the basis of other epistemes, other than in domains inaccessible to reason and sense perception.

19. See Halbfass (chapter 21), however, for resistance to the trump card of experience in certain conservative discourses such as the Mīmāṁsā, as in

the writing of Śaṅkara.

20. The ultimate *vairāgya*, detachment, is *guṇa vaitṛṣṇyam*, disinterest in anything made of the *guṇas*.

21. The roots of the tension between mythos and logos in fact goes back to the pre-Socratics.

22. See references in previous citations.

23. Of course, aspects of the historical method are selectively appropriated by a certain genre of nationalists in such political contestations as that over Ayodhyā, the birthplace of Rāma in epic sources (Gopal 1992), and the Aryan invasion debate (Bryant 2001).

24. See Brown (2013) for an excellent discussion.

25. See Holdrege (2013) for discussion.

26. Shukavak Dāsa (1999).

27. Albeit for completely di erent reasons, here he appropriates part of the hierarchical schema of Śaṅkara noted earlier (himself following a Madhyāmakā Buddhist schema).

28. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, for example, the so-called father of modern India, had no place for Kṛṣṇa in his Christian Upaniṣadic mélange, institutionalized as the Brahmo Samaj, and, indeed, lambasted him with no small measure of pre-Victorian-derived indignity.

Like his successors in the Brahma Samaj, such as Devendranatha Tagore and Krishna Chandra Chaterjee, he was nonetheless a monotheist (as opposed to, say, a neo-advaitin such as Vivekānanda), but he espoused a monotheism that conceived of God in terms much closer to the Abrahamic models that in uenced them so greatly than to those of the premodern Vaiṣṇava and Śaivite traditions. We can also place the in uential Dayānanda, founder of the Ārya-Samaj, on this side of the monotheistic spectrum. Others, like the more devotional Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, set out to

construct and propagate a righteous Kṛṣṇa as preserved in the *Bhagavad Gītā* by extricating him from what Bankim deemed centuries of Purāṇic accretions epitomized by the Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata*. Thus purged, the sterilized Kṛṣṇa could be set up as a superior role model for humanity to the Christ of the colonizers. There was a wide spectrum of monotheistic responses to the encounter with modernity on issues lying at the core of Hindu *bhakti* (see Sardella 2010, 2013, for discussion). The monistic neo-advaita response is an enormous topic in its own right, which lies outside the main concerns of this study. It has, in fact, received far more attention in both scholarly and popular circles than the monotheistic strains in Hinduism, for reasons that have arguably a lot more to do with Hindu nationalism in India and New Age spirituality in the West than any de facto reality of on-the-ground Hindu beliefs and practices past and present.

29. Note, for instance, Yaska's interpretation of Indra killing the Vṛtra demon, a pivotal Vedic and Purāṇic narrative, as the production of rain.

30. The historical accords with the traditional Vedic exegetes such as Sāyana; the mystical, which is his main focus, involves identifying hymns to various deities as actually denoting attributes of Viṣṇu; and the transcendent features the relationship between the *ātman* and *Brahman* (see Sharma 1971, 180 ., for discussion). One might wonder whether the nineteenth-century Dayānanda Sarasvatī was in uenced by Madhva's approach.

31. See Edelmann (2013) for discussion.

32. For discussion and references, see Edelmann (2013). The astronomical traditions of the *Siddhāntas* and *Jyotiḥśāstra* in the period 500–1900 C.E. were willing to depart from Purāṇic cosmology without rejecting the Purāṇas themselves. Similarly, literary theory presents elaborate theoretical criteria pertaining to when a primary signi cation (*vācya*) of a text is to be superseded by secondary (nonliteral) readings, speci cally indicated (*lakṣya*) and suggested (*vyaṅga*) meanings (brie y, wherever the primary meaning of scriptural passage is obstructed [*baddha*] by other knowledge, secondary meanings can be applied).

33. We should note, however, that Jīva would not call the mental absorption of the *asuras bhakti*, even as they might have attained some form of liberation. *Bhakti* requires a positive attitude toward *Īśvara* (see "Meditating in Enmity: Kṛṣṇa and the Demons").

34. *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 361, 743; Schi man, 130.

35. *Autobiography of Swami Sivananda*, ix.

36. The record of this claim is buried in the organization's archives, which I was not able to access, but it is common knowledge and surfaces in the brochures and other literatures of the organization (such as the Grass Valley, California, *Guide to Programs*, 2014, 26).

37. Uttarapara speech, May 30, 1909.

38. This well-known anecdotal exchange is noted in, for example, the Inaugural Souvenir of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, 1975.

39. Cornell (2001).

40. *Autobiography of a Yogi*, 399.

41. Muktānanda (1978), chapter 20. In Kaśmir Śaivism, blue is the color of pure consciousness.

42. For excellent historical excavations of the evolution of modern postural *yoga*, see DeMichelis (2004), Alter (2004), Singleton (2008, 2010), Straus (2005), Syman (2010), Sjoman (1996), and Jain (2015).

43. Western forms of dualism correlate the mind and cognition with the soul (*psyche*), whereas these are outer material coverings completely distinct from the *ātman*, in

Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta (but not in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣiká, where they are qualities of the *ātman* itself).

44. There are, of course, sections of the text dealing with the mystic powers that are obviously beyond the pale of scienti c acceptability.

45. In terms of theological dialogue, see the excellent work of Goswami (2012; one can only lament the author's premature demise after laying such a substantial cornerstone for a Vaiṣṇava contribution to inter-religious dialogue). In terms of the interface between the science of the *Bhāgavata* and modern science, see Thompson (1981, 2006, 2007); Cremo (1993) for an antagonistic view; and Edelmann (2014) for an accommodative view. For an excellent discussion of the challenges posed to Hinduism in general by modern science and an analysis of some of the responses this has engendered, see Mackenzie Brown (2012).

46. At the time of writing this introduction, the author received a visit from Bhadresh Swami, a *sannyasī* of the Swami Nārāyaṇa tradition, who bestowed a copy of his recently completed commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*. Other than evidencing the continuation of the formal *Vedānta* commentarial tradition, the swami expressed great eagerness and commitment to improving his English, and in being exposed to the modes of the Western academic study of religion, in order to engage in dialogue with what we have been calling "modernity" in this eld.

47. We follow here the Upaniṣadic usage of locating both the *ātman* and the *citta*, mind, in the heart (*Kaṭha* I.14, II.12, III.1, and IV.6–7; *Muṇḍaka* II.1.8 and 10, II.2.1, and III.1.7). Technically, according to Gauḍīya *siddhānta*, *bhāva* is bestowed by Kṛṣṇa as an act of grace (*Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* Eastern Quadrant II.233). It is a *śakti* power that permeates the *citta* (*antarāṅga śakti*).

48. We use the term "subject-centered" heuristically. More precisely, at this stage, all notions of subject and object dissolve.

49. See, for instance, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* III.15, V.6; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* I.1.6; *Gītā* II.11–30; and *Yoga Sūtras* II.5.

50. The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣiká traditions hold that consciousness is only an adventitious quality of the *ātman* when in conjunction with the mind and is

not manifest in liberation. Mīmāṁsā holds a similar view, although earlier Mīmāṁsā was not committed to notions of liberation.

51. See, for example, *Yoga Sūtras* II.2–21; *Gītā* V.21–22. We focus on desires here, but this level of consciousness includes emotions and intellectuality—that is, all objects of the mind, ego, and intellect—in addition to the senses.

52. See *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.24 . and 2.1 .; *Mokṣadharma* 177.16 .; *Yoga Sūtras* II.15–21; and *Gītā* II.64–65.

53. *Yoga Sūtras* I.3, 18.

54. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II.8.

55. Cārvāka and the Lokāyata traditions left no body of writing but must have been in uential enough for not only most of the orthodox Hindu schools, but also the Buddhists and Jains to include (and, typically, initiate) their sections on *pūrvapakṣa* (arguments against opposing schools), with refutations of "the materialists" (see Mādhava's *Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha* as an example of this). For an excellent compilation of all known Cārvāka sources, see Bhattacarya (2011).

56. See Vatsyāyana's commentary on *Nyāya Sūtras* I.1.22.

57. *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* 68.

58. *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* XI; *Yoga Sūtras* IV.34.

59. For example, *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* V.74. But see Bryant (2009, 182–83) for Yoga's possible di erence with Sāṅkhya and its alignment with Vedānta on the issue of bliss in *mokṣa*.

60. *Sāndrānānda-viśeṣa.*

61. Contra Halbfass (1988), who in his superb tome argues that relying on *yogic* experience as a trump card for *yogic* realities in the face of opposing epistemologies is a modern phenomenon.

62. *Mahābhārata vana parva* 312.117. This often quoted verse appears in various renditions of the text in the section where Yuddhiṣṭhira answers the questions of the *yakṣa*, but it is not included in the BORI critical edition, where this exchange takes place in Book III, chapter 297. See also *Vedānta Sūtras* I.1.11 and the earlier *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II.9) for similar expressions of the limitations of rational thought.

63. See VII.13.8.

64. Here, too, Rūpa re ects the *Bhāgavata*: "He should not become attached to many disciples, he should not study many books, he should not become attached to lecturing, and he should not undertake major projects [like monasteries, say the commentators]" (VII.13.8).

65. See *Yoga Sūtras* II.18.

66. The Purāṇic tradition identi es 8.4 million species according to its system of di erentiation as to what constitutes a species.

67. See *Yoga Sūtras* II.18; *Gītā* II.42, IX.20–21.

68. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* II.2; *Yoga Sūtras* II.15; *Gītā* V.22 and VII.3.

69. *Gītā* VI.22; *Vaśeṣika Sūtras* V.16; *Nyāya Sūtras* I.1.9, 22.

70. *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* X–XI.

71. *Dṛṣi-mātra*, *Yoga Sūtras* II.20.

72. We use these terms heuristically, as dualities such as internal/external and subjective/objective become meaningless or, more precisely, transcended in this state.

73. For example, those where *Īśvara* is invoked as the bestower of liberation, such as the *Yoga Sūtras* II.45, versus those, such as the *Sāṅkhya Karikā*, where *Īśvara* is not mentioned.

74. *Samādhi siddhiḥ*, *Yoga Sūtras* II.45 (in Nyāya He is depicted as the bestower of the fruits of work, *Nyāya Sūtras* IV.1.362, following on the

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad VI.16).

75. *Vedānta Sūtras* IV.4.10–14; and *Mahābhārata* (*Mokṣadharma* 196.21–22).

76. Rūpa identi es four qualities uniquely enticing about Kṛṣṇa: the sweetness of His *līlā*, the supremeness of His love, the sweetness of His ute, and the sweetness of His form (Southern Quadrant 1.209–15).

77. *Tattva Sandarbha anu* 6; and again in *Bhakti Sandarbha anu* 339.

78. The verb *kṛṣ* denotes to pull away, draw into one's power, pull toward oneself, overwhelm, and the like.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book I

1. *Janmādyasya yataḥ* is an exact duplication of *Vedānta Sūtras* I.1.2, where the phrase describes *Brahman*, the Absolute Truth of the oldest philosophical-mystical texts, the Upaniṣads. In doing so, the *Bhāgavata* is purposefully correlating Kṛṣṇa with *Brahman* as the ultimate highest Truth (as does the *Bhagavad Gītā*, for instance, in X.12, XIV.27). The commentators write their longest commentaries for this rst verse, as it sets the theological parameters for understanding Lord Kṛṣṇa. In essence, the text is promoting Kṛṣṇa as the highest and ultimate Absolute Truth, God, a personal Supreme Being (see, in this regard, the Vaiṣṇava reading of the *Gītā* in XV.16–20, VII.6–7 .).

2. Brahmā, the secondary creator, is not to be confused with *Brahman* (a more impersonal term to refer to the Absolute Truth). While Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa is the primary source creator of *prakṛti* (the primordial material stu from which all material entities are constituted), Brahmā functions more like an engineer, manipulating the *prakṛtic* stu to create the speci c forms of the universe. His tale in this volume narrates part of his role.

3. See "*Prakṛti* and the Three *Guṇas*: *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*" for a discussion on these three *guṇas*, qualities, of *prakṛti*.

4. “Dishonesty” is understood here as any scriptural teaching promoting bodily, mental, or worldly gain as its goal. Since the *Bhāgavata* teaches that a being’s ultimate reality is not body, mind, or of this world, which are temporary coverings and locations, but *ātman*, an eternal spark of *Īśvara* (God), then texts promoting boons for the body or mind (speci cally the older portions of the Vedic canon) are teaching only temporal truths, not the Ultimate Truth, and are in this sense dishonest.

5. These are miseries in icted by one’s own mind and body, by other living entities, and by the environment.

6. The *kalpa-taru* is a tree in the celestial realm that o ers anything requested of it. The Vedic scriptures are likened to this, as they are vast and variegated in their o erings, re ecting the myriad types of desires pursued by di erent embodied beings owing to their situation under speci c con gurations of the *guṇas*.

7. Śuka, the speaker of the *Bhāgavata*, also means “parrot.” The poetic implication (*dhvani*) here is that as a parrot will choose the sweetest fruit, so Śuka has spoken the highest and most relishable of scriptures.

8. An exclamation used repeatedly through the text. It corresponds to something like “I say!” in Victorian English.

9. See “*Rāga*, *Bhāva*, and *Rasa*” for a discussion of these terms.

10. See “The Divine *Brahman* Realms of Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka” for Viṣṇu’s *Brahman* realm of Vaikuṇṭha.

11. In contrast with the highest *dharma* noted in I.1.2 and again in I.2.6, *dharma* in this context refers to the variegated duties incumbent on the social, gendered, civic,

familial, and other responsibilities of embodied beings in Vedic culture. See I.2.9–13

and discussion in “*Bhakti* and *Dharma*” for the di erence.

12. Vyāsa is the legendary compiler of the Purāṇas, composer of the *Mahābhārata* epic, and divider of the original one Veda into four. See appendix 1.

13. Śrīdhara's reading of *para-avara* is *Brahman* with form and without form. See "The Nature of *Īśvara* in Vedānta: Primary or Derivative?" for a discussion of the personal and nonpersonal characteristics of God and various ways of construing higher and lower notions of Truth.

14. There are four *yugas*, world ages, in Hindu cosmography, from which *Kali* is the last and most degraded. Taking birth in this age is a symptom of poor *karma* from a past life.

15. The sages are complimenting Sūta: the sacred rivers are considered sacred only by dint of the fact that saints such as he bathe in their waters.

16. *Kali*, the fourth and most degenerate of the four ages, has been ongoing since Lord Kṛṣṇa departed from this earth.

17. See " *Līlā* and *Yogamāyā*."

18. *Māyā* is the illusion covering the *ātman* causing it to misidentify with its gross and subtle coverings.

19. Uttamaśloka—literally "one the verses glorifying whom are the highest of verses."

20. See " *Rāga*, *Bhāva*, and *Rasa*."

21. Kṛṣṇa's brother is often simply named Rāma, but I translate this as Balarāma so as not to create confusion with the Rāma of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who is an incarnation from a previous age (there is a third incarnation also sometimes called Rāma, Paraśurāma, whose narrative occurs in IX.15–16).

22. Vyāsa is an incarnation of Viṣṇu (I.3.21) and legendary composer of the *Mahābhārata* epic.

23. We can recall that there are eighteen Purāṇas, from which the *Bhāgavata* sees itself as

“the succulent ripened fruit of the desire tree of the Vedic scriptures” (I.1.3).

24. Nara and Nārāyaṇa are incarnations of Viṣṇu who perform austerities together in the Himālayas. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are identi ed with them.

25. We nd here the notion of *dharma* being recon gured in the *Bhāgavata* to denote the cultivation of *bhakti*, rather than the mundane pursuit of prescribed activities as per the *Dharma sūtra* texts (see “*Bhakti* and *Dharma*”).

26. We can recall here that the normative goal of Vedic *dharma*—that is, of the conventional religiosity of the time—was material gain in this world and the attainment of the celestial realms in the next.

27. For the *Bhāgavata*, nonduality indicates that everything emanates from *Bhagavān*—

nothing has separate or independent existence (however, see “The Nature of *Īśvara* in Vedānta” for the ways in which the notion of nonduality is understood very di erently in the various Vedānta traditions).

28. This is the all-important verse, where this three-level hierarchy within *Brahman*, distinctive of the Vaiṣṇava traditions, is expressed (see “A Three-Tiered Hierarchy of *Brahman*”).

29. After the sacred-thread ceremony, *brāhmaṇas* are considered twice-born (once bodily, the other into the sacred realm of Vedic knowledge).

30. The Vedic socio-civic system is divided into four *varṇas*, professional occupations (*brāhmaṇa*, teacher and religious specialist; *kṣatriya*, warrior/administrator; *vaiśya*,

merchant; and *śūdra*, general work assistant) and four *āśramas*, progressive stages of life (*brahmācarya*, student; *gṛhastha*, householder; *vanaprastha*, religious retiree; and *sannyāsa*, solitary ascetic).

31. *Kīrtana* consists of the chanting of the names and deeds of *Īśvara*. See “The Nine Practices of *Vaidhi Bhakti*.”

32. See “The Object of *Bhakti*” for the three *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, as the terms occur frequently throughout the text.

33. As in all *yoga* practice, the goal of *bhakti* is direct perceptual experience, in this case of *Īśvara*.

34. As discussed in part 1, from these three divine manifestations, the Purāṇas typically associate Hari/Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa with *sattva* and the maintenance of the universe; Brahmā

with *rajas* and its creation; and Śiva with *tamas* and its destruction. The *Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas* associate Śiva and Brahmā with religiosity that seeks material gain (or, at best, spiritual gain mixed with materialism, as in I.2.26–27, below, and discussion in “*Bhakti* Mixed with Attachment to *Dharma* and *Jñāna*”). Hence the statement here that the ultimate good—which was established in the opening verse (I.1.2) as being free of any such motives—is attainable only from Viṣṇu.

35. Vedic religiosity involves a highly elaborate, technical, and expansive set of rituals, for which re, as consumer of the oblations, is central (see introduction).

36. Since *bhūta* can refer to “ghosts” (literally “one who has gone”), Jīva, in his commentary here, mentions Bhairava, a particular form of Śiva that is the Lord of ghosts and other a icted beings.

37. The Manus are celestial progenitors. The present one is noteworthy for the *Dharma sūtra* texts that tradition associates with him, the *Mānava Dharma-śāstras* (also known as the *Manu Saṁhitā*).

38. *Aṁśa* (and its near synonym *kalā*) refers to derivative manifestations of a divine being that embody a partial but not full expression of the potencies and qualities of the source being.

39. This is an extremely important and seminal verse for Kṛṣṇa theologians and the cornerstone of their assertion that Kṛṣṇa is the source of Viṣṇu, rather than vice versa (see “Who Is the Supreme *Īśvara*?: The Purāṇic Context”).

40. Indra is the martial leader of the celestials, and his *dharma* is to battle the *asura* demons (for an example of an *asura* whom Indra could not defeat, thus requiring the intervention of an incarnation, see the Tale of Child Prahlāda).

41. In the *yogic* language of this verse, the "seen" as body and mind are external coverings imposed upon the "seer," the *ātman*, which is pure consciousness, because of ignorance (*avidyā*). See *Yoga Sūtras* II.17.

42. The subtle body referred to here, *sūkṣma śarīra* (also known as *liṅga śarīra*, or *antaḥkaraṇa*), also a covering of the *ātman*, is made from the subtler (= more *sattva*) evolutes of *prakṛti* prior to the densi cation of the *guṇas* into the gross elements , *mahābhūtas* (= more *tamas*) of the gross physical body. The latter dissolves at death, but the former transmigrates with the *ātman*—which, as the true self, is distinct from gross and subtle bodies—birth after birth. So there are three layers of selfhood, only one of which, the *ātman*, is ultimate, essential, and eternal.

43. Since the subtle body contains the mind, desires, and *kleśas*, its decisions are causally responsible for the type of gross body or e ects received in this and future lives (*Yoga Sūtras* II.1–15).

44. Kṛṣṇa is not explicitly mentioned in the Vedas.

45. These are enumerated in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (VI.5.73–75) as *jñāna*, knowledge; *śakti*, power; *bala*, strength; *aiśvarya*, lordship; *vīrya*, power; and *tejas*, splendor. In the Purāṇas, the term *Bhagavān* comes to mean possessor of these qualities in fullness.

46. The sense of this phraseology is that just as one can smell a fragrance from a distance, so, since He pervades everything while yet simultaneously remaining distinct, the Lord in all beings experiences through the senses of all beings in a detached manner.

47. Viṣṇu's trademark weapon is the *cakra* disc.

48. While this phraseology seems strange to Western sensitivities, references to Kṛṣṇa's feet are ubiquitous throughout the text. The idea is

that what might be considered the lowest part of a normal person's anatomy is a highly coveted source of bliss when it comes to *Īśvara*'s divine anatomy.

49. The *itihāsa* usually refers to the two epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but it is a term that can be used for any ancient narration or tale.

50. Knowledge systems in ancient India were transmitted by means of lineages, as we see in these verses (3.40–44; see also *Gītā* IV.1–2) .

51. The idea is that the maidens could sense that Śuka had transcended any bodily distinctions, since he saw beyond physical and gendered di erences to the universality of the *ātman* in all beings, and therefore they did not have to worry about being perceived as members of the opposite sex or sexual objects; this was not the case with his father, however.

52. The old capital of the Kurus was Hastināpura, "the city of elephants" (underscoring its imperial power), modern-day Delhi.

53. The idea here is that ascetics do not remain anywhere for long, especially the residences of householders, so as not to become attached. And when great saints do approach such residences, under the pretext of mendicancy, it is to bless the household.

54. Parīkṣit was the last remaining member of the entire Yadu dynasty while still in the womb. The story of the circumstances of his birth after the great *Mahābhārata* war is recounted in the *Mahābhārata* (10.16.5–10, 14.68.15–25) and, with variations, *Bhāgavata* (I.7, 12).

55. The Vedic hymns deal with mundane boons for temporary material prosperity and thus would have been of no interest to a *yogī* such as Śuka.

56. Each *yuga* sees a progressive decline in the principles of *dharma*.

57. *Divya cakṣus*. See *Gīta* XI.8, where Arjuna is bestowed "divine eyes" to see the cosmic form of Kṛṣṇa, for another instance of this.

58. In addition to the *hotṛ*, the other three ritual specialists are *udgātṛ*, *adhvaryu*, and *brāhmaṇa*, who recite hymns from the *Ṛg*, *Sāman*, *Yajus*, and *Atharvan Vedas*, respectively. The *brāhmaṇas* oversee the procedures, and the others recite hymns from their respective Vedas noted in the next verse.

59. Vyāsa is considered a partial incarnation (*aṁśa*) of Viṣṇu in V.21, below.

60. One of the symptoms of the present age, *Kali yuga*, is that people's memories decrease, hence the larger corpus was subdivided into manageable subunits, making it easier to retain.

61. In Vedic orthopraxy, women and *śūdras* were denied access to Vedic study or participation in the rituals (other than the passive token role played by the sponsor's wife). While the epic and Purāṇa traditions do not directly oppose these attitudes, they are innovative in undermining them and bypassing them, speci cally in the context of the *Bhāgavata*, by allowing all living entities equal access to at least the teachings, practices, and goals of *bhakti*, even as the larger social-civic order is still promoted as ideal. (It is useful to keep in mind our own Western social and gendered history up to as recently as the post–World War II period, when judging this.) 62. De ned in I.2.6–8, as that through which *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa is born (see "*Bhakti* and *Dharma*").

63. Literally "great swan." Swans are believed to be able to separate milk from water, a metaphor for great saints who can distinguish illusion from Truth.

64. Note the term *āśrama* here, in the premodern period, refers to a humble hermitage of a sage, typically on the banks of a sacred river.

65. As noted in part 1, there are four *puruṣārthas*, goals of human life: *dharma*, the performance of one's duties; *artha*, the material prosperity that ensues from this; *kāma*, the access to sense indulgence that this, in turn, facilitates; and *mokṣa*, the quest for liberation when *kāma* proves to be unsatisfying.

66. For a similar reference, but using the language of two *prakṛtis*, see *Gītā* VII.4–5.

67. "For the most part" might allude to the fact that the *Mahābhārata* epic does contain some description of Kṛṣṇa, most extensively in the *Harivaṁśa* appendage to it (as do a number of Purāṇas, such as the *Viṣṇu* and *Padma*).

68. The *nāma-rūpa* of the Upaniṣads (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* I.4.7) refers to the *asat*, temporal (literally "that which has no enduring being")—the permutations of *prakṛti* (that is, the forms that emerge and fade away, to which convention assigns names).

69. For example, that desire leads to suering and that one should actually seek Truth.

70. See note to I.3.28.

71. These are listed in the Tale of Ajāmila (VI.3.20–21).

72. We have interrupted the sequence of the *Bhāgavata* here, as Nārada recounts his previous life in a later book to the one in which his story is given.

73. The *gandharvas* are warrior celestials, also renowned for their musical abilities.

74. *Apsarās* are celestials renowned for their dancing abilities.

75. During the four months of the rainy season, *caturmāsa*, wandering ascetics, who otherwise do not stay in one place for more than three nights, are permitted to remain in one location.

76. Ascetics eat one meal a day. Eating the remnants of their food, *prasādam*, is considered purifying, a reection of the purity of saints.

77. The *kleśas* of *avidyā* and *asmitā*, ignorance and ego, cause one to consider the material body and mind to be the real self (*Yoga Sūtras* II.2–4). Nārada here by the grace of the sages has essentially gained a realization of his true *ātman* nature, accompanied by the realization that what he had

previously thought himself to be—the body and mind— was in fact a mental fabrication.

78. The notion of threefold *tāpas*, su erings, is widespread in philosophical literature (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.15 and commentaries). The three *tāpas* are *ādhyātmika*, the miseries of the body and mind; *ādhibhautika*, the miseries in icted by other entities; and *ādhidaivika*, the miseries caused by nature and the environment.

79. Actions performed out of desire produce seeds of reactions that perpetuate *saṁsāra* (*Yoga Sūtras* II.12–14). But the same actions, when performed as an o ering of devotion to God, do not produce reactions (*Gītā* IX.27–28). They also burn up the latent seeds of previous actions that have yet to bear their fruit, *prārabdha karma*.

80. These names are of the four *vyūhas*, particular four-armed forms of Viṣṇu, each of which appears as a family member of Kṛṣṇa in His incarnation. In the teachings of Lord Kapila, they are associated with the rst evolutes from *prakṛti* (*Bhāgavata* III.26).

81. Since Brahmā is the rst embodied being, he is not begotten by parents, as is the norm for living entities. See the story of Brahmā in this volume for the narrative pertaining to his origin.

82. It is standard in Hindu texts for those who renounce the world in search of spiritual Truth to set out in the direction of the north—the Himālayas, where the great sages reside.

83. See "The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*" for the di erent types of liberation in the *Bhāgavata*.

84. This refers to some kind of lightning, possibly forked.

85. According to *Bhāgavata* theology, the *bhaktas* who attain full liberation through devotional methods attain a *Brahman* body with which to pursue their devotional relationships with Viṣṇu in Vaikuṇṭha, or Kṛṣṇa in His divine realm of Goloka (see "The Divine *Brahman* Realms of Vaikuṇṭha

and Goloka"). Nārada chooses to travel between Vaikuṇṭha and the material world so as to enlighten others.

86. As touched upon in the *Gītā* (VIII.17 .), in Hindu notions of time, there are four (sub-)ages, *yugas*: the *Satya yuga*, *Treta yuga*, *Dvāpara yuga*, and *Kali yuga*. A thousand of these is a *kalpa*. A *kalpa* corresponds to one day of Brahmā and another to his night.

Thus, Brahmā sleeps for a *kalpa*, during which the manifest universe is withdrawn into the body of Viṣṇu and remains in a latent state. Brahmā then awakes and recreates for another *kalpa*, then sleeps and so on for one hundred Brahmā years. Thus, according to this verse, Nārada also remained in a hibernating state along with Brahmā for the duration of one of Brahmā's nights.

87. Normally one needs the requisite *karma* to transit from one realm in *saṁsāra* to another, but Nārada is able to go to any realm at will. Moreover, he is able to go beyond *prakṛti* to the pure *Brahman* realms called Vaikuṇṭha, where Lord Viṣṇu resides.

88. *Tīrtha-pāda*. India is full of holy places associated with incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, that is, places touched by His "feet" (*pāda*).

89. *Aho!* is the classic Sanskrit exclamation of wonderment and appreciation.

90. "The city of elephants," capital of the Kuru dynasty (see earlier note).

91. This refers to attempts on the Pāṇḍavas' lives before they underwent their thirteen-year exile in the forest, described in the great *Mahābhārata* epic (for instance, the burning of the house of lac in I.124).

92. This story refers to a series of events: sage Māṇḍavya was innocently impaled by a king, after he happened to be arrested with some thieves. After the king released him upon realizing his mistake, the sage went to Yama, the Lord of death, asking him why he had been subject to this experience, despite his innocence. Yama replied that Māṇḍavya had once impaled an insect in his childhood. Hearing this, the sage cursed Yama that he would be

born as a *śūdra* for such disproportionate punishment. Yama thus took birth as Vidura, who was born from Vyāsa in the womb of a servant girl.

During his absence, the celestial being Aryamā took his post as Lord of death (*Mahābhārata* 1.101).

93. Vyāsa, the great sage, was requested by his mother, Satyavatī, widow of the emperor Śantanu, to beget children in the wives of his dead brother, heir to the throne, so as to perpetuate the royal dynasty as per Vedic custom. When one of them saw the appearance of the sage, frightful from his austerities, with his matted locks, erce eyes, unwashed body, and unkempt beard, the poor girl covered her eyes during the sexual act. As a result, the o spring of this union, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, was born blind.

94. This clinging to life is one of the ve *kleśas* in the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.9).

95. After the war, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was residing in the palace of his nephews the Pāṇḍavas and surviving on their benevolence, even though his own sons had tried to kill them and almost destroyed the entire dynasty, with very little e ort made from the part of the blind king to control them (*Bhāgavata* III.1.6 . touches on a few of the king's weaknesses).

96. These episodes relating to the attempts made by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons to kill the Pāṇḍavas refer to some of the episodes mentioned in verse 8 above.

97. This is a reference to the Himālayas, the destination of those abandoning the mundane world to seek Truth exclusively.

98. An ancient king of the Puru dynasty.

99. Members of the *sannyāsa* order of life often carry a sta .

100. The idea here is that renunciants enjoy the challenge of tolerating the hardships and austerities of the Himālayas, just as warriors enjoy a good ght.

101. Gāndhārī's one hundred sons, the Kurus, all perished in the great war.

102. For the *guru* as helmsman, see X.87.33 (quoted in "*Satsaṅga* and the *Guru*").

103. This refers to Kṛṣṇa's o cial mission during His incarnation: to eliminate all the *asuras*, the enemies of the celestials, who had taken birth as demoniac kings and had become a disturbance on earth.

104. These sages are Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasiṣṭha.

105. The *kṣetra-jña* is the *ātman* still bound by the subtle body.

106. This state of *turīya* ("the fourth") is that of pure consciousness, where consciousness is not aware of any object external to itself. Attaining this is the goal of generic *yoga* practice. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* features the four states of consciousness (which it correlates with the segments of the sacred syllable *oṁ*). The idea here is that Śamīka's consciousness was not externalized, and thus he was not aware of the king's presence or request for water.

107. For similar concerns about the negative consequences of caste intermixture, see *Gītā*

I.39 .

108. The horse sacri ce was performed on the coronation of kings wishing to establish their supremacy over neighboring kings (see, for instance, Yudhiṣṭhira after the great war in the *Mahābhārata*, book 14).

109. The dualities are happiness and distress, hot and cold, honor and dishonor, and so on.

They essentially refer to all shades of sensual or mental experiences.

110. See *Gītā* II.38, 64.

111. This is a reference to the Vāmana incarnation, who traversed the universe with his step, which was then washed by the celestials. The water from this, according to the *Bhāgavata*, is the origin of the *Gaṅgā* river

(VIII.21.3–4). On its way to the earth, it ows past the celestial realms, hence the reference to “both worlds.”

112. The *tulasī* plant is sacred to Viṣṇu and found in the homes of all traditional Vaiṣṇavas.

When food is o ered to the deities in Vaiṣṇava devotional practices (*bhakti*), a *tulasī*

leaf is placed on each item of foodstu .

113. The idea here is that in conventional lore, one goes to a holy place to be puri ed in the sacred rivers and such of that place. But since the saints residing in such places always carry Viṣṇu in their minds, it is actually they who purify the holy places to begin with.

114. This is a statement of humility, as well as of honor for the sages: the water used for washing feet is normally considered contaminated and discarded at a distance, but Parīkṣit is saying that kings are even more contaminated than this, so they should be discarded far from even where the water used for washing the feet of the *brāhmaṇas* is deposited.

115. These placements are all considered auspicious, as is *kuśa* grass, used as a seat in Vedic rituals.

116. The idea here is that lesser kings bow down to the royal throne of the Kurus (thereby touching it with the helmets on their heads).

117. The etymological meaning of the word *vai-kuṇṭha* is “free of dullness.”

118. The Vedas have divine personalities; they can manifest as texts or as celestial beings.

119. Kṛṣṇa’s father, Vasudeva, was the brother of Kuntī, the wife of Pāṇḍu. Hence Kṛṣṇa is a cousin of the Pāṇḍavas (the sons of Pāṇḍu). He is thus Parīkṣit’s granduncle (Parīkṣit is the grandson of Arjuna, one of the ve Pāṇḍavas).

120. For *japa*, see *Yoga Sūtras* I.27; *Gītā* X.25; and "*Kīrtana* (Chanting)."

121. The idea here is that renunciants do not associate with worldly people. They may come to a household in the guise of begging some alms in the form of a draft of milk, in order to bless the householders and give them an opportunity to inquire about Ultimate Truths, but they do not tarry there.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book II

1. For Khaṭvaṅga's story, see *Bhāgavata* IX.9.44 .

2. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, the intelligence is analogized as the driver of the chariot of the body, with the mind as reins, the horses as senses, and the *ātman* as the passenger.

3. This is a reference to the earlier ritualistic portion of the Vedic corpus, which provides provisions as to how to attain material prosperity in this life and the attainment of the celestial realm in the next. Texts such as the *Bhāgavata*, here and throughout, the *Gītā*

(II.42–43), and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.7–13) decry those who follow such injunctions, since they simply perpetuate their cycle of birth and death, rather than seeking the ultimate goal of liberation.

4. Dreams are the activation of *saṁskāras*, the imprints of memories recorded during the waking state (see commentaries to *Yoga Sūtras* II.11).

5. Ascetics in the forest sometimes wore coverings made of bark (archaeological discoveries of a type of material made from pulped bark in ancient China may possibly point to the method employed in this regard).

6. According to the commentator Śrīdhara, the *Vaitaraṇī* river ows by the gate of Yama's realm of the dead.

7. This is drawing from the reference in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (III.13).

8. The meditational form referred to here as "grosser" is outlined in the previous chapter (verses 23 ., which we have not included in these

selections). It visualizes various natural phenomena as construing the parts of *Īśvara*'s body—the sky as His eyes, day and night as His eyelids, and so on.

9. We nd in this verse the exact wording of Patañjali's verse on *āsana* in II.46, *sthira-sukham āsanam*, which here clearly refers to an actual seat, as it does throughout *yoga* literature.

10. Texts such as *Gītā* VIII.23–27 speak of the most auspicious times to leave the body, and the advantages of dying in auspicious holy places are also promoted in numerous texts. This verse dismisses such considerations.

11. The *kṣetra-jña* is the *ātman* still connected to the subtle body.

12. This well-known Upaniṣadic phraseology points to one method of realizing *ātman*/ *Brahman* by eliminating all temporal things that it is not—namely, the *ātman* is not the body, or the mind, and so forth (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II.3.6, III.9.26, IV.2.4, and IV.4.22).

13. Here the *Bhāgavata* describes a praxis typically associated with the Tantra traditions.

While the *Bhāgavata* clearly accepts this process, it is not a method emphasized throughout the text. Also, the names of the *cakras*, and even the term *cakra* itself, are not used in the text, merely the associated locations.

14. Those with mystic powers can travel to any of the celestial (and such) realms within *prakṛti*, and some, such as Nārada or the four Kumāra sages, can even go beyond these and enter the *Brahman* realms of Vaikuṇṭha (*Bhāgavata* III.15). The performers of Vedic ritual also aspire to the celestial realms, based on the merit of performing sacri ces (*karma*) but at best can attain only one such realm in their next life.

15. While the *suṣumṇā* is connected with the primary *prāṇa* channel through which the *kuṇḍalinī śakti* arises in Tantric physiology, it is also a section of the universe in Hindu cosmology.

16. The commentator Madhva identi es this location as Mahar-loka.

17. In the *Gītā* (VIII.17), a *kalpa* is equivalent to one day of the highest celestial being, Brahmā, a period equal to a thousand cycles of the four *yuga* ages, or 4.32 million human years. Brahmā lives for a hundred years in this time frame, in accordance with his superexcellent merit, but is nonetheless mortal and subject to the laws of *karma*.

The celestial bodies, prolonged life spans, and heightened enjoyments of the celestial residents referred to in this verse are similarly attained by those with exceptional pious merit. But in actuality they are nothing but the highest expressions of *jatī*, *āyur*, and *bhoga* (type of birth and duration and quality of life) outlined in *Yoga Sūtras* II.12– 13. The *Bhāgavata* cosmography, with all its various realms, is described in the fth canto.

18. We can recall that Patañjali is considered an incarnation of Śeṣa, the thousand-headed serpent expansion of Lord Viṣṇu, upon whom the latter reclines when emanating and withdrawing the unlimited universes in cycles of creative evolution and involution.

19. After this period, the universe is destroyed, reduced to its matrix of pure *prakṛti*, and withdrawn into Lord Viṣṇu for a further two *parārdhas*, after which it is again manifest forth, in a never-ending cycle of creation and dissolution.

20. This entire process involves an involution or reversal of the sequencing of the Sāṅkhya categories during the manifestation of the universe.

21. This is a reference to the two paths mentioned in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (and in the *Gītā*

VIII.26 .), one leading to liberation, the other to rebirth. The commentator Viśvanātha here also mentions the *Kaṭha* II.3.14 as a reference to the direct path.

22. The inference is that if there are instruments of perception and objects of perception, there must be a perceiver, or seer, who utilizes them. Therefore, because of the existence of instruments and objects of perception, we can validly infer the existence of a seer. The basic principle of Hindu logic (*nyāya*) is that when making an inference about the

existence of something unperceived, there must be invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*—that is, no known exceptions) between a perceivable "sign" or a known characteristic (*liṅga*) of that thing and the inferred object possessing that speci c characteristic. Thus, from the characteristic, one can infer the existence of the unperceived substance or thing possessing that characteristic. So, using the standard *nyāya* example, wherever there is smoke, there is always re as its cause—there are no exceptions to this (if an opponent can nd an exception to the supposed *vyāpti*, the inference is invalid and the argument fails). So if one sees smoke, one can legitimately infer that re must be present—even if the re itself is not perceived (since smoke is an invariable characteristic of re and has no other known cause). So in the inference referred to in this verse, wherever there are instruments and objects, there must be an entity using the instruments to perceive the objects. The *buddhi* (intelligence) and so forth are instruments of perception, therefore they must have a perceiver, the *ātman*.

23. Verses 2–9, which were omitted here, outlined various worldly boons attainable from the worship of the celestial beings. The sense is that even if one's *bhakti* is mixed with

mundane desires, as discussed by Jīva in "*Īśvara*, Pure *Bhakti*, and Motivated *Bhakti*,"

one should still worship *Bhagavān*.

24. See *Mahābhārata* XII.326.65, 337.60.

25. *Nāma-rūpa* refers to any perceivable object in existence, which by dint of having a form, *rūpa*, can be known and therefore can be assigned a name, *nāma* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I.4.7).

26. By performing *tapas*, Brahmā could not be the Supreme Being, as one performs *tapas* to attain something, indicating that one is lacking that thing, and also that one requires powers beyond one's natural powers to attain it.

27. The idea here is that people bewildered by *māyā* (*avidyā*) think of themselves as their bodies and minds (*asmitā*), instead of *ātman*, and thus

think in terms of “I” and their bodies, minds, families, and possessions as “my” (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.3–6; *Gītā* III.27).

28. See *Gītā* VII.19.

29. These are philosophical terms: *dravya* are substances like the elements of earth, water, air, re, and ether that underpin qualities; *karma* is action and its reactions; *kāla* is Time, understood to be the glance of Viṣṇu in this text; *svabhāva* is one’s inherent personality, formed by *saṁskāras*, as also the inherent nature of material entities; and *jīva* refers to the *ātman* in *saṁsāra*.

30. The *guṇas* underpin everything and thus are the basis of the substances noted here (that is, the elements of Sāṅkhya, an expression of the *tamas* aspect of *prakṛti*); knowledge, which is a function of the *citta*, is here a reference to the *sattva* aspect of *prakṛti*; and action is a reference to the *rajas* aspect of *prakṛti*. Anything enacted by these entities are causes, which produce e ects. Owing to illusion, the *jīva* thinks that it is the agent, when in fact all action is performed by the *guṇas* (*Gītā* XIII.21).

31. The idea, of course, is that *Īśvara* is everything.

32. In the *Bhāgavata*, the *Virāṭ* is a meditational form incorporating all material entities as various aspects of the Supreme (see, for example, II.5–6). Kṛṣṇa’s cosmic manifestation in the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* is also considered a type of *Virāṭ-rūpa* by the commentators.

33. *Kha-ga* could also be a reference to the realm of birds, but given the context here (and that birds are mentioned later in the list), it is more likely a reference to those who have attained the mystic power of transporting themselves through the ether (referenced in *Yoga Sūtras* III.42).

34. These are all various types of celestials, expert in song and dance—and, with the *gandhārvas*, martiality (see *Mahābhārata* 3.130).

35. These are all subterranean but nonetheless powerful beings. The *yakṣas* and especially the *rākṣasas* play signi cant roles in the *Mahabhārata* epic.

36. See discussion in “De nition of *Īśvara* in Vedānta.”

37. In the Sāṅkhya system, there are ve *karmendriyas* (instruments of action)—the hands, feet, organ of evacuation, organ of procreation, and tongue; and ve *jñānendriyas* (instruments for acquiring knowledge)—the eye, ear, nose, and senses of taste and touch.

38. Among the features characterizing Viṣṇu is the *śrīvatsa*, a tuft of hair on his chest.

39. These are identi ed variously in the commentaries.

40. The term for opulence here is *bhaga*, an old Vedic term that once referred to the portion of the sacri ce that was reserved for a deity but, by the classical period, refers in Vaiṣṇava sources to the six opulences. They are supremacy, righteousness, fame, opulence, knowledge, and detachment. As discussed in "De nition of *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, and *Brahman*," the term *Bhagavān* refers to the one who possesses these in full, eternally and unlimitedly—and this indeed is one de nition of God Almighty in Vaiṣṇavism, since, as noted in this verse, all other beings may only partially manifest some of these opulences temporarily and sporadically.

41. *Paramahaṁsa*, literally "great swan," refers to the most fully realized saints. The line refers to the path of *bhakti*, often summarized by worship of the lotus feet of Viṣṇu.

42. While the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* deals with *yogī* exemplars, Hindu literature is replete with references to those who perform *tapas* so as to attain supernormal powers for materialistic or even demoniac purposes—Rāvaṇa, who kidnapped Sītā, in the *Rāmāyaṇa* comes to mind, as does Hiraṇyakaśipu in the *Bhāgavata* (see the Tale of Child Prahlāda in this volume). Hence, although Patañjali discusses them, he takes pain to note that real *yogīs* are not interested in them (*Yoga Sūtras* III.37).

43. The metaphor of the *ātman* being seated in the cave goes back to the Upaniṣads (*Kaṭha* I.14, II.12, III.1, and IV.6–7; *Muṇḍaka* II.1.8 and 10, II.2.1, and III.1.7).

44. For Vaiṣṇava and *Bhāgavata* theology, this indicates that Viṣṇu has no form made of dull matter *prakṛti*. As this narrative establishes, he does,

however, possess form (and unlimited forms) made of *Brahman*, pure consciousness, as discussed in part 1.

45. The metaphor of the spider spinning its web goes back to the Upaniṣads (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II.1.20; *Śvetāśvatara* VI.10; *Muṇḍaka* I.1.7).

46. Under normal circumstances, all actions performed out of desire generate reactions—

the law of *karma* (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.12–14). But actions performed for *Īśvara* are free of *karma* (*Gītā* IX.27–28).

47. As Yoga has its *aṅgas*, limbs (*aṣṭāṅga*), so too does *bhakti*. The notion goes back to the six *aṅgas* of the Vedas that were ancillary to the performance of Vedic ritual.

48. Compare with *Gītā* IX.4–5. The idea in this simile is that the elements preexisted as independent elements prior to becoming ingredients in the forms of created beings. So they both enter creation by being constitutive of all created objects and also do not, as their own existence predates the things created by them.

49. *Anvaya-vyatireka* is a process of logic that establishes the existence of something through positive and negative concomitance. For example: "Wherever there is consciousness (*ātman*) there is life (positive concomitance), and wherever there is no consciousness there is no life (negative concomitance)."

50. See *Yoga Sūtras* II.30–45 and earlier note.

51. See "Introduction to the Volume," "The *Bhāgavata* as Text."

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book III

1. At the end of each cosmic cycle, the universe, and hence the elements of *prakṛti*, dissolve into their nest constituents (which are ultimately the *guṇas*) and lie latent within the manifestation of Viṣṇu, who resides within

each universe (as discussed in the introduction, there are multiple forms of Viṣṇu).

2. This refers to the type of *yoga* outlined in the *Yoga Sūtras* that culminates in *nirbīja samādhi*, awareness absorbed in its own pure nature. Hence, in the Yoga tradition, Brahmā is considered the rst *yogī* (and reputed author of the original Yoga treatise, the *Hiraṇyagarbha Saṃhitā*).

3. Viśvanātha takes this as one hundred human years but does not comment on the discrepancy with II.9.8 above.

4. Patañjali is considered by tradition to be an incarnation of Śeṣa, also known as Ananta (see commentaries to *Yoga Sūtras* II.47).

5. The sense is that generally ornaments and garments enhance a person's beauty, where here the reverse is true: the beauty of the ornaments is enhanced by the beauty of God.

6. See earlier citation (II.9.15).

7. The imagery of this verse seems to be resonating with that of the banyan tree at the beginning of chapter 15 of the *Gītā*.

8. This mixed metaphor reads awkwardly in English but is not uncommon in stylistic Sanskrit poetics. The wind is the sounds (teachings) of the Vedic texts.

9. The three *dhātus*, dispositions, in Āyurveda are *vāta*, air; *pitta*, re; and *kapha*, mucus.

10. This is a reference to the *Paramātman*, or *Antaryāmin*, a form of Viṣṇu that pervades the individual *ātman*.

11. This seems to be a reference to *Vedānta Sūtras* (II.1.3), where the author responds to an atheistic opponent (*pūrvapakṣa*) that a Being who is complete and in possession of everything does not need to create, as people create to obtain something they do not already have. The response is that God creates out of *līlā*, a pure act of joyful spontaneity.

12. The Tale of Ajāmila illustrates such unintentional chanting at the moment of death.

13. *Samādhi* is the nal limb of Patañjali's eight limbs of *yoga*. It culminates in consciousness becoming absorbed in its own pure nature, rather than in the permutations of the mind or sensations of the corporeal body (*Yoga Sūtras* I.3).

14. *Tapas* is part of the second limb of *yoga*. Of relevance to this narrative is that extreme forms of austerities can result in the attainment of mystic powers (*Yoga Sūtras* IV.1).

15. The sense is that Viṣṇu, in his form of Time (see *Gītā* XI.32), strips everything from everyone at death. The name used for Viṣṇu here, Urukrama, "the one with a vast stride," is a reference to the Vamana incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, who covered the entire world with one step and the entire universe with another. In this *līlā*, he stripped King Bali, the regent of the universe, of all his possessions.

16. The *Kāma sūtras* are part of a genre of texts that occupy themselves with "*dharma*, *artha* (resources), and *kāma* (pleasure)," special attention being given to the last (verse 1).

17. This mystic power, *siddhi*, is called *prākāmya*, being unobstructed in ful lling one's any desire.

18. This mystic power is referred to in *Yoga Sūtras* III.19.

19. The sense here is that although two of the preconditions for *yoga* are nonattachment and celibacy (*Yoga Sūtras* I.15, II.30), which then generate the necessary power to exhibit supernormal powers (*Yoga Sūtras* IV.1), Kardama was not a ected by this very sensual situation.

20. The *siddhas* are accomplished *yogis*, who sometimes exhibit mystic powers like ying around the upper realms of the universe.

21. The *Gaṅgā* is held to descend from the celestial realm.

22. Kardama had previously informed Devahūti that he would leave home to take up the life of a wandering ascetic as soon as she conceived a child (III.22.19).

23. Patañjali states that the mind's activities can be either detrimental to the goals of *yoga* or bene cial to it, *kliṣṭa akliṣṭa* (I.5), or, as the *Gītā* puts it, the mind is either the friend of the *ātman* or its enemy (VI.5). The idea is that when the mind becomes attached to Kṛṣṇa or, as in this verse, the *bhāgavatas*, such attachment leads to perfection. Attachment to sensual indulgences, in contrast, leads to bondage and rebirth. See "*Rāga*, *Bhāva*, and *Rasa*" for relevant discussion.

24. This is a reference to III.21.32, where Viṣṇu informs Kardama that a portion of Himself (*aṁśa*) would take birth from Devahūti after she had given birth to nine daughters, in order to teach the truths of Sāṅkhya Yoga.

25. For the ve *niyamas*, see *Yoga Sūtras* II.32.

26. The commentor Śrīdhara states that the knot in the heart is the *ahaṅkāra*, ego—

considering the inanimate mind to be the self.

27. The *prajāpatis* are the progenitors of the species in the universe. They are born of the creator, Brahmā.

28. This name of Viṣṇu comes from His killing of the Madhu demon (*Mahābhārata Vana Parva* CCVII.16).

29. There are various types of celestial beings: the *gandharvas* are winged warrior celestials renowned for their singing, and *apsaras* are celestial nymphs known for their dancing.

30. Celestials traverse the realms in divine vehicles.

31. Marīci is one of the six sages born from Brahmā's mind.

32. Brahmā is born from a lotus emanating from Viṣṇu's navel.

33. The term *aṁśa* refers to a type of divine manifestation whereby a portion of God's presence or power, rather than the full Godhead, incarnates. There are unlimited divine manifestations in *Bhāgavata* theology, each one manifesting di erent qualities and potencies.

34. Lotus eyes are a standard motif in Hindu aesthetics to denote beauty. Lotus feet are likewise standard, especially in reference to beings worthy of worship. In addition, incarnations are recognizable by special markings on the soles of their feet and palms, which include the lotus.

35. *Karma*, translated here as "ignorant action," refers to action performed under ignorance of the true self. Ignorance, *avidyā*, is the root cause of *karma* (*Yoga Sūtras* II.4–5), the primary *kleśa* or obstacle to enlightenment indicated in *Yoga Sūtras* II.4–5, namely, action that is performed under the illusion that one is the body and mind by one seeking ful llment through the body and mind.

36. This is a reference to another demon destroyed by Viṣṇu. The story is narrated in the *Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva*, chapter 348, and the *Devī Bhāgavata*, book 1.

37. Sāṅkhya, perhaps the oldest philosophical system in ancient India, was the speculative metaphysical matrix in matters of analyzing the ingredients of physical reality. (Yoga emerged as one ingredient from this matrix to provide the practical technique of realizing the ultimate reality of *ātman* embedded within this physical reality.) The reference to other teachers here points to the fact that there were numerous Sāṅkhya traditions in circulation (the *Bhāgavata* mentions several).

38. Brahmā is sometimes referred to as the "Swan." His vehicle also happens to be a swan.

39. The universe, in Hindu cosmogony, is schematized as consisting of "three worlds": the celestial, human, and subterranean planes.

40. The four Kumāras are enlightened child *yogīs* whose stories are encountered in book 3, chapter 16.

41. Nārada is one of the greatest devotees of Viṣṇu and travels around the universe chanting the glories of Viṣṇu on his *vīṇā* stringed instrument. He surfaces in many episodes of the *Bhāgavata*, frequently acting as a sort of catalyst to developments in the narrative (see the Tale of Sage Nārada).

42. There are nine sages, *prajāpatis*, born of Brahmā, whose progeny populates this universe.

43. Kardama is demonstrating his humility here, considering himself lowly.

44. See *Gītā* VI.45 for a similar statement pointing to the *yoga* path typically taking many births to reach its full conclusion.

45. The sense here is that Viṣṇu will appear in whatever form is pleasing to His devotee.

46. As noted previously, respect is o ered to superiors in Indian culture by honoring or touching or placing one's head on their feet, the idea being that one places the highest part of one's anatomy on the lowest part of the superior's. This sense of respect is magni ed here, by considering even the stool upon which God's feet are placed to be worthy of worship.

47. These are the standard six qualities possessed in absolute fullness by God, Viṣṇu (and in varying lesser degrees by all other beings; see "De nition of *Īśvara, Bhagavān,* and *Brahman*").

48. The commentator Śrīdhara takes *tṛi-vṛta* here to refer to the *ahaṅkāra*, the second evolute from *prakṛti*, which, under the in uences of the three *guṇas*, manifests respectively the mind, the senses, and the sense objects out of itself.

49. The soul, or pure consciousness, is enveloped in two external and extraneous bodily coverings: gross and subtle. While the gross physical body is changed at each new birth and returns back to *prakṛti* (the gross elements), the subtle mental body is retained life after life until the birth in which enlightenment and liberation is attained, after which it too returns to subtle *prakṛti*.

50. We are reminded here of Kṛṣṇa indicating that the path of Yoga (*buddhi/karma yoga*) that he had formerly imparted to the ancients had become lost, and hence he was rearticulating it to Arjuna (*Gītā* IV.2).

51. *Ātmani ātmanā*. The sense here is that since the self (*ātman*) is pure consciousness, it cannot be perceived by the senses or the mind, which are made of matter (*prakṛti*). It can therefore only know itself in itself by itself (as indicated in the *Gītā* VI.20).

52. Circumambulation (usually of a deity or temple) is an auspicious act of respect and worship.

53. This is a reference to mainstream Vedic religiosity, which, like that of other old-world cultures, involved o ering items into the sacred re for material boons. The ascetic traditions denigrate such materialistic practices (see, for instance, *Muṇḍaka Upaṇisad* 1.7–11; *Gītā* II.42 .).

54. *Sat-asat* here can mean the real and the nonreal, the true and the false, cause and e ect, and other such things. The sense is that God is the ultimate absolute cause of all causes.

55. As pure conscious *Brahman*, Viṣṇu is without material qualities, *guṇas*, yet as a source of matter, *prakṛti*, He is the source of the *guṇas*.

56. This is a major theme in the *Gītā* (see 11.54 and 18.55).

57. The *dvandas* here are Vedānta categories referring to the dualities of the body, such as hot and cold; and of the mind, such as happiness and distress (see, for example, *Gītā*

II.14 and 45, IV.22, and VII.28). Since Kardama was absorbed in his true self, the *ātman*, he was transcendent to the dualities of the material body and mind.

58. See the metaphor of the ocean being fed by rivers yet remaining unmoved in *Gītā* II.70.

Desires might arise in the mind of the *yogī*, as these are simply *saṁskāras* of past experiences, but the *yogī* does not identify with them, simply witnessing them from a place of detachment without attempting to ful ll them.

59. See *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (V.2) for an example of this (although later tradition posits two di erent Kapilas, the one referenced in the *Bhāgavata* and the one in the *Śvetāśvatara*).

60. In fact, the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali cannot really be considered "philosophical" at all; it is aimed primarily at describing meditational states and the methods of attaining them; it is Sāṅkhya, in actual fact, that represents the philosophy and metaphysics of Yoga, sensu stricto. There were various versions of Sāṅkhya in percolation at the time, as exempli ed in the highly elaborate theistic strain we nd here in the teachings of Kapila in chapter 25 and onward.

61. There are various *prāṇas*, life airs, in Hindu physiology that permeate the body and facilitate the functioning of the senses and organs.

62. In the *Gītā* (XV.15), Kṛṣṇa states that He is both the knower and the compiler of the Vedas.

63. The "I," "me," and "mine" here refers to the false self, namely, the body and its possessions—the *ahaṅkāra* of Sāṅkhya (termed *asmitā* in the *Yoga Sūtras*). Since Viṣṇu is the creator of *prakṛti*, and hence all its evolutes such as ego (*ahaṅkāra*), Kapila, as His incarnation, is indirectly the creator of *ahaṅkāra*.

64. In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa states that He had originally imparted the teachings of *yoga* in primordial time, but over the course of time, they became lost (IV.2).

65. While there are references in, for example, the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* of a six-limbed yoga, the more dominant model became the eight limbs of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*: ethics, morals, posture, breath control, sense withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and *samādhi*, complete meditative absorption.

66. See earlier note to III.23.55 and below.

67. The sense of *udāsīna* here is that *prakṛti* is unconscious and simply acts according to mechanistic principles such as *karma*.

68. See earlier note to III.23.55.

69. The term for virtue here is *sādhu*. Thus a *sādhu* (ascetic) is *sādhu* (virtuous).

70. *Śruta* here refers to the materialistic enticements, both in this world and in the celestial realms, o ered in portions of the *Śruti*, the older Vedic sacred texts (more speci cally, the ritualistic genre of sacred text known as the *Brāhmanas* and their associated literatures). The Vedic sacri cial rites outlined in these texts were typically performed to ful ll material desires. For similar statements, see *Yoga Sūtras* (I.15) and *Gītā*

(II.42 .) .

71. *Nirvāṇa*, in early texts, was a generic term adopted by di erent schools to refer to liberation (see, for instance, *Gītā* II.72 and IV. 24–26). It was not associated exclusively with Buddhism until later times.

72. See verse 14.

73. We should bear in mind here that most ascetics at the time were male—although we know of women such as Gargī, who outwits the great sage Yajñavalkya in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III.6), and Maitreyī, who does not allow her husband to fob her o with material inheritances (ibid. II.4). Additionally, as was the case elsewhere in the world in premodern times, the transmission of knowledge systems on technical philosophical matters such as Sāṅkhya would have been a male preserve.

74. *Devānāṁ guṇaliṅgānām* can be translated as senses because the senses are “signs” (*liṅga*)

—that is, evolutes of the *guṇas* (for this usage, see *Yoga Sūtras* II.19); and they are considered controlled by the *devas*, celestial beings. When *sattva* is

at its apex, the senses are controlled and one's actions are *dharmic* and free of self-interest (see *Gītā*

XVII.17 and XVIII.9).

75. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II.1–5) speaks of the various *kośas*, subtle sheaths, that cover the soul. Generic liberation ensues once these are removed and the soul can shine forth in its own true autonomous nature.

76. Service to the feet is a standard motif in *bhakti*.

77. As discussed in "The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*,"

there are ve types of liberation recognized in *bhakti* (see *Bhāgavata* III.29.13, below).

From these, the *ekātmatā* of this verse involves merging into God (this is considered to be the lowest level of liberation in Vaiṣṇava traditions). The sense is that devotees desire to serve a personal, separate, and Supreme Divine Being, not merge into Him in oneness, obliterating the personality and individuality both of one's own soul and of God as a distinct Supreme Soul.

78. In Hindu aesthetics, reddish eyes are a sign of beauty.

79. Viṣṇu's abodes, Vaikuṇṭha, are not within the realms of *prakṛti* but are realms within *Brahman*.

80. This refers to another of the ve liberations noted above, namely, *sārṣṭī*, having the same opulence as God.

81. There are eight mystic powers referred to in classical texts such as the *Yoga Sūtras* (III.45). They are 1) *aṇimā*, "minuteness": the ability to make one's body atomic in size; this allows one to become so small that one can enter into anything (and hence become invisible to anyone); 2) *laghimā*, "lightness": the ability to make the body as light as one desires in terms of weight; 3) *mahimā*, "largeness": the ability to make the body as heavy in weight as one desires; 4) *prāptiḥ*, "attainment": the ability to attain anything one might desire; 5) *prākāmya*, "freedom of will": the ability to be

unobstructed in one's desires; 6) *vaśitva*, "mastery": the ability to control the elements and their qualities and to control other beings; 7) *īśitṛtva*, "lordship": the ability to control the outward appearance, disappearance, and rearrangement of the elements; 8) *yatra-kāmāvasāyitva*: the ability to manipulate the elements at will according to one's fancy.

82. This refers to another of the ve liberations noted above, namely, *sārūpya*, having the same form and beauty as God.

83. Viṣṇu's *Brahman* abode, Vaikuṇṭha.

84. The celestial realms, *svarga*, are paradises that pious souls attain in the next life to enjoy the fruits of their good deeds. However, they too are temporary and thus within the cycle of *saṁsāra*. When one's merit is exhausted, one returns again to this world (*Gītā* IX.20–21).

85. Indra is the god of rains, the Indic counterpart of Zeus and Thor in the cognate Indo-European traditions.

86. This common Vedāntic metaphor points to the fact that the sun remains stationary and unmoving in the sky, even as its re ection in a body of water dances and moves and appears a ected by the waves of the water. Likewise, the *ātman* remains unchanged even though it is re ected in the ever-changing mind.

87. The term used here for ego is *ahaṅkriyā*; the more common term is *ahaṅkāra* (*asmitā* in the *Yoga Sūtras*; *abhimāṇa* in the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*).

88. *Karma-doṣa*: every action generates a reaction, or consequence, good or bad in accordance with the nature of the original action.

89. The previous verse spoke of actions and reactions—cause and e ect—that result in the various births in the world of *saṁsāra*. Actually, these are all simply ephemeral—the ever-changing temporary creations of *prakṛti*; the soul is always aloof and transcendental.

90. The *yamas*— nonviolence, truthfulness, celibacy, nonstealing, and nonpossessiveness—

are the rst of the eight limbs of classical *yoga* (*Yoga Sūtras* II.29–30).

91. This is a reference to the three states of consciousness rst outlined in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*— waking, dream, and deep sleep. These are followed by pure consciousness, the fourth state (*turīya*), the goal of *yoga*.

92. The idea is that the self, *ātman*, cannot be perceived by the senses or the mind or by any external *prakṛtic* instrument. Therefore it can perceive itself only by means of itself. This phrase, *ātmanātmānam*, occurs elsewhere (see *Gītā* VI.20).

93. *Sad-ābhāsam-asati*. The state alluded to here is called *asmitā samādhi* in the *Yoga Sūtras*.

The pure undisturbed mind can become aware of the *ātman* by the re ection of the latter's consciousness upon itself.

94. See earlier note for the mind (here, ego) as mirror.

95. *Sabīja* is when the mind is concentrated on an object in the penultimate stages of *samādhi*, prior to uncoupling from the mind altogether (*Yoga Sūtras* I.46 and preceding verses).

96. For feet as a trope, see earlier note.

97. See earlier citation (II.2n10).

98. We notice that the *Bhāgavata* essentially presents the identical *yamas* and *niyamas* as Patañjali in (II.30 .), with *yāvadartha-parigrahaḥ* as a rewording of *aparigrahaḥ*; and *puruṣārcana*, of *Īśvara-praṇidhāna.*

99. The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* is one source referencing the *cakras*.

100. *Āsana* practices—bodily postures and the like—are solely intended to train the body such that it can sit in a still posture (*āsana*) for prolonged periods of meditation. Thus the term can mean postures or seat.

101. See *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* or commentaries on *Yoga Sūtras* II.49.

102. The term *doṣa* here could refer to imperfections in the balance of the bodily constitution as understood in Āyurveda, but in *yoga* literature, it is more commonly used as a synonym for the *kleśas*, obstacles to *yoga* (*Yoga Sūtras* II.2 .).

103. See *Gītā* V.27.

104. *Śrīvatsa* is a curl of hair on His chest. These adornments, garments, and other bodily details are all standardized descriptions of the form of Viṣṇu, repeated frequently to strengthen one's ability to internally visualize the form in meditation practice.

105. The idea here is that the mind is used as a hook to "catch" (contemplate) this vision of *Īśvara*. The supreme *Īśvara*, of course, like the *ātman*, exists beyond the mind.

106. At this point, the *yogī* is not making fresh *karma* and has destroyed all latent *karma*, but the *karma* already activated at birth has to run its course. See *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* (68) for an expression of this.

107. *Mahat* is the rst evolute from *prakṛti* (synonymous with *buddhi*).

108. See discussion in "The Rejection of *Brahman*."

109. In Vaiṣṇava theology, a form of *Īśvara*, the *Antaryāmin* or *Paramātman*, pervades and sustains each individual *ātman*.

110. Everything is done by the senses, mind, and intelligence, which are all expressions of *prakṛti* overseen by *Īśvara*.

111. *Kalā*, partial manifestation, in *Bhāgavata* theology refers to the *ātman* as a tiny part of *Bhagavān* (it also refers to other forms of Viṣṇu such as the *Antaryāmī/Parama-ātman*; see discussion in "A Three-Tiered Hierarchy of *Brahman*").

112. *Buddhi* is the rst evolute from *prakṛti* and source of all other categories of matter down to the *aṇus*, the smallest elemental particles (see Sāṅkhya chart in appendix 2).

113. I have translated the term *bhinna-dṛś*, literally “one sees di erences,” variously according to context (for example, in verse 23 as “who does not see others as equal”

and so forth).

114. In *Bhāgavata* cosmology, the universe is covered by seven layers—earth, water, re, air, ether, mind, and ego—each one ten times thicker than the previous layer.

115. Śiva is the deity presiding over *tamas*, Brahmā over *rajas*, and Viṣṇu over *sattva*.

116. A *yojana* is variously estimated to be nine miles or ve miles.

117. The various realms of the universe, including the hellish realms, are discussed in the fth book of the *Bhāgavata*, chapters 16–26.

118. These are the *dhātus* of Āyurveda: chyle, blood, esh, fat, bone, marrow, and semen.

119. For the three *tāpas*—those pertaining to the body and mind, those ensuing from other living entities, and those in icted by the environment—see page 564n9 (and the commentaries to *Yoga Sūtras* II.15).

120. See previous citation for *aṁśa* (612n33).

121. The body is described as a city with nine gates in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* III.18 and *Gītā* V.13.

122. The gross body changes every birth, but the same subtle body accompanies the *ātman* birth after birth. However, the *saṁskāras* of a *jīva*’s previous birth are covered over by *tamas* in a subsequent birth, even as their e ects bear their *karmic* fruits, and they exert subconscious in uences.

123. The *ātman* can be perceived only by itself, not by the mind, senses, or any other means. See page 613n51.

124. This verse refers to various evolutes of Sāṅkhya, which envelop the *ātman* with both sense instruments and sense objects. Therefore, the universe is, in this sense, the body of the *ātman*.

125. This refers to a *līlā* where Kṛṣṇa in the form of a baby lies on the waters of the cosmic ocean during the devastation of the universe, sucking His toe.

126. This refers to the Varāha incarnation, who retrieved the Vedas that had been stolen, and thus the knowledge bearing Vedānta teachings of the Upaniṣads, III.13–19.

127. In Vedic orthopraxy, certain rites, such as pressing the sacred *soma* plant to extract the juice for o ering to the celestials, could be performed only by the highest *brāhmaṇa* caste, while those outside the Vedic caste system such as dog-eaters were considered so polluted that they were not allowed to even be present in the vicinity of such sacri ces. The idea here is that even those in the lowest rung of the social order, such as dog-eaters, thereby become puri ed by *bhakti* to *Bhagavān* and surpass the quali cations of those who are assigned the highest social status by birth. In other words, *bhakti* trumps all social and gender strati cations, at least in terms of spiritual possibilities.

128. Viṣṇu's carrier is the great eagle Garuḍa. Kṛṣṇa has Garuḍa as the emblem on His ag (for instance, in the battle of Kurukṣetra).

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book IV

1. This tale is dedicated to Michael Ciccone.

2. See, for example, *Yoga Sūtras* II.45; *Gītā* XII.6–7 and XVIII.62.

3. Dhruva controlled his distraught mind by means of intelligence and reasoning. See *Gītā*

VI.20 for similar phraseology.

4. Compare with *Yoga Sūtras* I.33.

5. The term for “equilibrium” here is *samaḥ*. *Gītā* II.48 de nes *yoga* as *samatvam*,

“equanimity.”

6. The universe is conceived of as having three realms—higher, middle, and lower.

Dhruva’s grandfather is Lord Brahmā himself, the engineer of the entire universe, who lives in the highest celestial realm of the universe, so aspiring for an abode higher than his is a seemingly impossible order!

7. Sage Nārada travels around the universe through his mystic powers and is always to be seen playing his *vīṇā* stringed instrument and chanting the glories of Lord Viṣṇu.

8. See verse quoted on page 12–13.

9. The three forms of breath control are *recaka*, suspension after exhalation; *pūraka*, suspension after inhalation; and *kumbhaka*, suspension of both (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.50

and commentaries).

10. We are reminded here of Patañjali referring to *Iśvara* as the Supreme *Guru* in I.26.

11. Kṛṣṇa has certain characteristics, one of which is a curl of hair on His chest called *śrīvatsa*.

12. The heart is the locus of the *ātman* (and the *citta*) in the Upaniṣads and Vedānta traditions (see, for example, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* I.6). In *Bhāgavata* theology, a form of Viṣṇu, *Antaryāmī* or *Paramātmān*, also resides within the heart with the individual *ātman.*

13. *Japa*, the repetition of *mantra*, is by far the most prominent form of meditation in the Indic traditions (see *Yoga Sūtras* I.27–28).

14. See *Yoga Sūtra* s III.42 for the mystic ability to travel through the air, a *siddhi* that has roots in early Vedic texts (*Āpastamba Sūtras* II.9.23.6–8; *Sāma-vidhāna* III.9.1).

15. This verse prescribes the worship of God in the form of a deity. There is great exibility in terms of time and place in deity worship (see note 17 in this regard).

16. Vaiṣṇavas, devotees of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa, always place leaves from the *tulāsi* plant on their food o erings to the deity.

17. This refers to the eight substances from which deities can be made, discussed in

"*Arcana* (Worship)."

18. *Uttamaśloka*, "one whose verses are supreme," can mean that the praises (in the form of *ślokas*, or verses) o ered to God are the highest praises, or it can mean that the verses composed by God (such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*) are the highest.

19. For the four goals of human life implied here, see page 602n65.

20. Circumambulation of a person or sacred place is an act of worship and reverence.

21. Nārada is here referring to three of the four goals of life, noted above.

22. Dhruva was meditating on Hari, the Soul of the Universe, and in this sense, he became as if one with this object of concentration—that is, with the universe. In the *Yoga Sūtras*, terms like *samāpatti* and *saṁyama* point to concentrative states where the meditator and object of meditation become as if one by dint of the meditator's intense absorption on the object (see I.41 and III.3), a type of merging of the mind with the subtle substructure of all reality. Therefore Dhruva's state spilled over into the universe: since he had restrained his own breathing, the entire universe became correspondingly choked and deprived of air.

23. Urukrama is a name of Viṣṇu meaning “one whose step is wide.” It is taken as a reference to the incarnation of Vāmana in *Bhāgavata* VIII:19.

24. This is most likely a reference to the *Puruṣa-sūkta* hymn of the *Ṛg-Veda*, where the Supreme Being is described as having a thousand heads. *Sahasra-śīrṣā* is also a name of another manifestation of Viṣṇu called Śeṣa, the thousand-headed serpent upon whom Viṣṇu reclines in the ocean of milk. Patañjali, the author of the *Yoga Sūtras*, is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa.

25. Most divinities ride a mount, and Viṣṇu’s is an enormous eagle, Garuḍa.

26. *Daṇḍavat*, like a stick, is full prostration on the ground, with arms extended full length in front.

27. Viṣṇu’s form and paraphernalia, such as the conch mentioned here, are made not from *prakṛti*, matter, but from *Brahman*—that is, pure consciousness.

28. The text here is giving a preview of the boon that Viṣṇu will bestow on Dhruva. The name for the polestar in Sanskrit texts is Dhruva, which literally means “that which is xed.”

29. The *mahat- tattva* is primordial *prakṛti*, the material matrix from which all the ingredients of material reality emerge. It consists of the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. It is Kṛṣṇa’s *māyā* (see *Gītā* VII.14).

30. See the Tale and Teachings of Lord Brahmā.

31. The *kalpaka taru* is a tree found in the divine realms, which ful lls any desire.

32. As discussed in part 1, *Brahman* is conscious spiritual energy that emanates from the form of the Lord in *Bhāgavata* theology and contains myriad individual *ātmans*. The individual *ātman* souls are composed of this *Brahman*, and many *yogīs* engage in meditation on their own *ātman* to experience the bliss therein. The sense here is that the bliss of coming in

contact with Kṛṣṇa (the Supreme *Ātman*) is far greater than the bliss inherent in the liberated individual *ātman*. See “Hierarchies of Bliss.”

33. The celestial realms are temporary realms within the world of *saṁsāra*, which beings with exceptionally good *karma*, meritorious activity, attain until the fruits of their good deeds expire. Residents of those realms are said to move about in celestial air-vehicles.

34. As discussed in part 1, in *Bhāgavata* theology, association of Viṣṇu’s devotees is one of the most important ingredients of the spiritual path.

35. Vaikuṇṭha is Viṣṇu’s divine eternal abode in Brahman, the kingdom of God.

36. Garuḍa is the eagle carrier of Lord Viṣṇu (and is retained as the name of Indonesian Airlines, re ecting the spread of Indian epic narrative to Southeast Asia during the rst millennium C.E.).

37. The four *puruṣārthas*, goals of human life; see earlier note.

38. The four Kumāras—Sanandana, Sanaka, Sanātana, and Sanat—were ve-year-old boys who were great devotees of Lord Viṣṇu and eventually attained His abode. Their story is narrated in *Bhāgavata* III:15 and elsewhere.

39. The sense here is that instead of seeing everything as connected to God, Dhruva saw di erences (for instance, perceiving his brother as an enemy instead of as a fellow soul).

40. In the *Gītā* (VII.17), Kṛṣṇa states that *daivī- māyā* is His power of illusion (see earlier note), and thus one can overcome it only by surrendering to Him.

41. Dhruva is lamenting his request for the ful llment of his material desire instead of asking for a spiritual boon.

42. The sense here is that because of poor deeds performed in the past, a person’s intelligence is limited or deluded as a consequence.

43. Smelling the head of someone is a sign of intense a ection in Hindu aesthetics.

44. We can recall that Brahmā and the progenitors (*prajāpatis*) are empowered to create the forms of the universe. But they are not the primary creators (that is, of matter or the *ātmans*). They are thus more like engineers.

45. Here, as elsewhere, is a reference to the *Antaryāmin* (see "A Three-Tiered Hierarchy of *Brahman*").

46. The idea is that Dhruva is now ready to pursue the fourth goal, *mokṣa*, having ful lled the preparatory three: *dharma*, duty; *artha*, prosperity; and *kāma*, enjoyment (see earlier reference).

47. While *gandharvas* are celestial beings and themselves not considered illusory, imagining one has seen their city in this world corresponds to the maxim of a castle in the sky (that is, castles exist, but not in the sky).

48. This is known today as Badarīnātha.

49. This form, used in preliminary meditation by conceptualizing a personal form of *Bhagavān* composed of natural phenomena (such as the sun and moon as eyes and so forth), is described in III.6.

50. *Samādhi*, in its highest stage, is contentless awareness in the *Yoga Sūtras*. See "*Smaraṇa* (Remembering)" for comparison with Vaiṣṇava notions of *samādhi*.

51. Circumambulation of shrines, temples, holy objects, and the like is always undertaken in a clockwise direction.

52. The symbolism here should be clear: Dhruva had transcended death.

53. The commentaries take this to be *sapta-ṛṣis*, the seven sages. See V.22.17 for reference to this (and chapters 16–26 of the fth canto in general for *Bhāgavata* cosmology).

54. According to the *Bhāgavata*, the four Kumāras were born from Brahmā, as was Śiva (III:12).

55. Śrīdhara takes these to be the ve *kleśas* of *Yoga Sūtras* II.3 .— ignorance, ego, desire, aversion, and clinging to life. But there are also ve *kośas* rst mentioned in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II.2.1 as food, life air, mind, intelligence, and bliss.

56. Compare with *Gītā* II.62–63.

57. Compare with *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I.4.8.

58. The commentaries take this to be the *Antaryāmī*, a form of Viṣṇu who permeates and sustains each individual *ātman*. See "The Object of *Bhakti*: *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, *Brahman*, and Divine Hierarchies," note 78.

59. Here, the king, in his humility, is indicating that everything belongs to the true *brāhmaṇas*, such as Sanat-kumāra. Needless to say, a true *brāhmaṇa*, by de nition, is one who knows *brahman*, as indicated in verse 41, and hence is indi erent to all material possessions.

60. *Karma yoga*, giving up attachments to the fruits (results) of one's actions and acting either from a place of pure sel ess duty, *dharma*, or, higher still, by o ering all one's activities to Kṛṣṇa, is one of the main teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā* (for similar language, see II.47–48).

61. The idea here is that realized souls understand that all action is performed by the *prakṛtic* mind and senses; the *ātman* is simply the witness, not the "doer" of deeds.

62. There are four stages of life (*āśramas*), each lasting twenty-ve years: *brahmacarya*, celibate studentship; *gṛhastha*, householder; *vānaprastha*, forest dweller; and *sannyāsa*, full ascetic renunciant.

63. In this form of austerity, the *yogī* sits in the middle of four res placed in each of the cardinal directions, with the fth, the sun itself, blazing down from above. The idea is to develop detachment from the sensations of the body.

64. Doubt is a function of the intelligence, *buddhi*, associated here with *jñāna*, one of the ve *kośas* found in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad.*

65. The idea here is that even liberating insight is a state of mind and hence it, too, must ultimately be transcended.

66. This type of practice involving the manipulation of the *prāṇa*, life airs, is more typical of the *Śākta* traditions.

67. In Sāṅkhya metaphysics, the subtler elements produce grosser ones sequentially, and the order is reversed when the universe is dissolved, as Pṛthu is here doing on a micro level with the elements of his own body.

68. The *mahat* is the rst evolved stage of *prakṛti* after it has been agitated into creativity.

In these verses, Pṛthu is progressively involuting, or dissolving every aspect of his material self back into its progressively subtler source, such that only his pure *ātman* remains in its original uncovered nature.

69. The benedictions outlined in the next few verses are not uncommon in the *Bhāgavata*.

While they are materialistic in scope, they are clearly a form of "skillful means": enticing those with materialistic ambitions to read the story and thereby become infected with the seed of *bhakti*. The real intended boon is noted in the last verse of the chapter.

70. For the four goals of life, see previous citation.

71. *Karma* here refers to ritualistic activities. The signi cation of the term covers any form of religiosity that has materialistic (body/mind) bene ts as its aim.

72. A subterranean city of celestial serpents, renowned for its beauty (literally "the place of enjoyment").

73. In the aesthetics of Sanskrit poetics, walking like an elephant is a sign of beauty (one needs to consider the graceful sway of an elephant's gait,

despite its size, to appreciate this).

74. Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune, holds a lotus in one of her hands.

75. One can recognize celestials, as their feet never touch the ground (they also do not blink, and their garlands never fade!).

76. Kāma, the God of Love, like his Indo-European counterpart, Cupid, shoots arrows of love from his bow. He is “mind-born” because he was born from the mind of Brahmā.

77. It is anathema for a *kṣatriya*, warrior, to beg for anything.

78. *Brāhmaṇas* are exempt from, or receive signi cantly reduced, punishments (*Manusmṛti* 8.379–81).

79. This refers to the story of Yayāti, whose youngest son accepted his old age from him (*Bhāgavata* IX.18–19).

80. *Mamatā*: from the ultimate perspective, nothing belongs to the real self, the *ātman*, so all notions of ownership (such as “my family”) are illusory.

81. As Kṛṣṇa states in the *Gītā*, the state of mind at the moment of death determines the next life (VIII.6).

82. Time is relative in Purāṇic cosmography (see the story of Brahmā in part 3).

83. This is likely a reference to the *Bhagavad Gītā* and/or *Uddhava Gītā* (where Kṛṣṇa imparts a lengthy discourse to Uddhava in the eleventh book of the *Bhāgavata*).

84. We are reminded of I.2.6 in the setting of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* chapter, where the highest *dharma* is de ned as uninterrupted *bhakti* to Hari that is free of all motives.

85. See note 92 below for the *karmendriyas* of Sāṅkhya.

86. Here (as throughout), I follow the commentators in translating *śakti* as intelligence (*buddhi*).

87. The *ātman* is sometimes metaphorically called “swan.”

88. See discussion in “A Three-Tiered Hierarchy of *Brahman*” pertaining to the *ātman* as a part, *aṁśa*, of *Īśvara*.

89. The sense here is that there is only one person, even though he or she may appear to be two—the person looking in the mirror and the face re ected back.

90. Some beings have no legs, such as plants, or one or more, depending on the bodily form.

91. In Sāṅkhya, the ve *jñānendriyas* are the organs of hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting; and the *karmendriyas* are those of speaking, grasping, moving, excreting, and procreation.

92. These are the ve *prāṇas*, life airs (*prāṇa*, *samāna*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna*).

93. As we nd in *Gītā* IX.25, if one worships the gods, one attains the realms of the gods; if one worships the forefathers, one attains that realm. The scriptures teach all manner of things in accordance with the di erent proclivities and understandings of living beings, so in accordance with what one hears and follows from the scriptures, one attains a corresponding destination.

94. This is an extension of the chariot analogy of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (III.9).

95. These are the standard three types of su ering recognized in many soteriological traditions of ancient India that are in icted on all beings (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.15 and commentaries).

96. When in ignorance of one’s true self, the *ātman*, one thinks one is one’s material body and that one actually owns one’s possessions.

97. Compare with the black and white *karma* of the *Yoga Sūtras* (IV.7).

98. See *Gīta* (II.42–46) and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I.7–11) for similar deprecation of Vedic ritualism.

99. It is only the gross body made of the ve elements that is discarded at death. The same subtle body accompanies the *ātman* birth after birth; it is discarded only after the life in which one becomes enlightened. Hence, despite the change of bodies, it is the same entity in the next life who enjoys the fruit of actions performed in a di erent body by that same agent in a previous life, and not a di erent person.

100. Dreams, in Yoga psychology, are experiences patched together from imprints (*saṁskāras*) of actions performed when awake. So in dreaming, one may appear to inhabit a di erent body, but that dream body is made up of imprints gathered while awake in the physical body. The idea is that just as the experiencer of a dream is the same agent who previously planted the seeds of actions when awake, so the mind of a being in a future body experiences the fruit of action performed by the same mind in a previous birth.

101. As has been noted previously, this phraseology re ecting false notions of the self is common. When one thinks of the self as the body, one thinks in terms of “mine” and

“other.”

102. Thus, according to this verse, a case (for example) of déjà vu, where one feels a sense of familiarity with, say, a place where one has never been in this life, is explained by dint of the fact that one has been to that place in a previous life and hence there is a subconscious imprint of that place in the mind.

103. The mind might conjure up impossible things in dream or fantasy—the commentators give the examples of a sea on a mountaintop (place), stars in the day (time), or beheading oneself (action), which are in fact experiences that have never taken place —but what the mind is doing is patching together imprints of two things that have been experienced (an imprint of a

sea from one place superimposed upon a separate imprint of a mountain from another and so forth). Put di erently, they are the confusion of—or, better, fusion of—incompatible times, places, and actions.

104. The commentators take these ve parts variously: we have followed Viśvanātha here.

105. This metaphor is probably left truncated because it would have been well-known from its source (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV.43).

106. Here termed *tat-sāmyatām*. See "The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*" on the ve types of devotional liberation.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book V

1. Consider here the *Gītā*: "The ignorant deride Me when I assume a human-like form. They do not know My higher nature, nor that I am the *Īśvara* of all beings" (IX.11). The Vaiṣṇava traditions hold that when *Īśvara* descends, He does so in a pure *Brahman* body, not in a form made of the *guṇas* (see, for instance, *Bhāgavata* X.14.2).

2. By supporting Bharata as king without envy, his brothers are supporting the well-being of the kingdom and thus of the citizens.

3. The *agni-hotra* is one of the Vedic *yajñas*, re rituals. Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā* (see V.29 and IX.24) and throughout the *Bhāgavata* (see 5.14.30, 45), is the ultimate consumer of sacri ce.

4. The *brāhmaṇas* are consistently eulogized throughout the *Bhāgavata*, as is typical of Vedic literature, so it is pertinent to keep in mind exactly what the text understands to constitute the qualities of this caste; verses 24–25 are particularly noteworthy in this regard.

5. The *āhavanīya* is one of the three re structures into which oblations were o ered (the eastern one) central to certain Vedic sacri cial rites (*yajña*). Beginning with the later Vedic texts such as the *Āraṇyakas* and Upaniṣads, some of the Vedic rites, which were external and materialistic in intention (that is, performed for the purpose of worldly boons), are internalized and

recon gured with esoteric meanings as we nd here (for instance, see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I.1 for an example of this).

6. The idea is that Ṛṣabha was so saintly that even his body and its discharges were very *sāttvic* (see *Gītā* XIV.11 for something along these lines).

7. See chapter 3 of the *Yoga Sūtras* for some of these powers.

8. The *Yoga Sūtras* state that "the mystic powers are accomplishments for the mind that is outgoing but obstacles to *samādhi*" (III.37). Typically, they are construed as obstacles to those seeking the *ātman* or *Īśvara* and thus of no interest to real *yogīs*, who are contrasted with other characters depicted in the Purāṇas who performed astonishing austerities simply for the purpose of gaining powers that could be used in malevolent ways (see the Tale of Child Prahlāda).

9. Śiva, the quintessential ascetic, was nonetheless bewildered by Viṣṇu in the latter's female incarnation as Mohiṇī (*Bhāgavata* VIII.12), and the Tale of Saubhari later in this volume recounts his fall-down.

10. As indicated in the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* (LXVII), the body of the *yogī* who has attained enlightenment continues to function for the remainder of that life, owing to the *saṁskāras* already activated at birth for that life, even as this then becomes the *yogī*'s nal life (like the potter's wheel that continues to revolve for a period even after the potter ceases to pump it, because of the kinetic energy already invested in it, even as no further energy is being generated). In Ṛṣabha's case, given his devotional absorption, the functioning of his body continued under the jurisdiction of *yogamāyā*

(rather than generic *māyā*; see "*Līlā* and *Yogamāyā*" for discussion). And hence, like an innocent child, says Viśvanātha, he put a stone in his mouth.

11. Mystic powers essentially entail supernormal capabilities and thus are simply enhanced versions of the same temporary, unsatisfying limitations that pertain to mundane sense indulgences.

12. See II.2n10 for the four *puruṣa-arthas*, goals of life . The bliss experienced from the performance of *bhakti* trumps all of these goals, including the fourth, *mokṣa*, the desire for liberation itself (see “The Rejection of *Brahman*” for further discussion).

13. The *brahmacarya āśrama* is the period, up to the age of twenty-ve, when students would study Vedic knowledge systems under the tutelage of the teacher, *guru*. For the *brāhmaṇa* caste (see below), this would consist of the sacred Vedic texts. For the warrior caste, as would have been the case with Bharata, the texts and practices pertaining to warfare, *dhanur-śāstras*, and polity, *nīti* and *dharma-śāstras*.

14. The *gṛhastha*, or householder, accepts a wife and raises progeny. In this phase of life, one engages fully in one’s caste occupation. These are *brāhmaṇa*, teaching/priestly caste; *kṣatriya*, warrior/administrative cast; *vaiśya*, merchant/landowning caste; *śūdra*, artisan caste, as well as those employed in service by the other castes (see *Bhāgavata* XI.11 and *Gītā* chapter 18 for discussion).

15. In this third phase of *vānaprastha*, husband and wife practice celibacy, detach themselves from the household, which they entrust to their by now grown-up o spring, and together retire to sacred places to pursue *yogic* practices more fully.

16. Thus, to this day, the name for India in traditional circles is Bhārata.

17. We are reminded here of the *Gītā*: “Whatever is o ered to Me with *bhakti*—a leaf, fruit, ower, or water—I accept from one who is devoted, when it is o ered with love”

(IX.26).

18. These are some of the bodily symptoms of ecstasy ensuing from the advanced stages of devotional meditation.

19. The sense here is that Bharata’s mind was focused internally, meditating on Lord Viṣṇu, who is seated in the heart of all beings along with the individual’s own *ātman*, rather than on external objects. As early as the

Upaniṣads (see *Kaṭha* II.20), the heart is considered to be the seat of both the *ātman* and the mind.

20. The day in ancient India was divided into thirty *muhūrtas*. A *muhūrta* thus corresponds to forty-eight minutes.

21. *Oṁ* is considered the sonic manifestation of *Brahman*, the Absolute Truth, throughout the Upaniṣads, most notably the *Māṇḍūkya*. It is the preferred method of xing the mind in the *Yoga Sūtras* (I.27–28).

22. The ve *yamas* are listed in the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.30) and elsewhere as nonviolence, truthfulness, celibacy, refrainment from stealing, and refrainment from covetousness (the Buddhist *yamas* replace the last one with no intoxication).

23. One of the duties of a king is never to deny protection to a vulnerable and innocent being who approaches for refuge. Although Bharata had renounced the function of kingship, his kingly *saṁskāras* still prompted him to protect a helpless entity.

24. See previous citation (II.12n2).

25. The *kirātas* are a tribe of hunters from a certain area in ancient India who lure animals to trap them. References to them in classical literature tend to be derogatory.

26. The *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, and *Sāma Vedas*.

27. This is a reference to the ancient Vedic re rites, which even some ascetics in the forest continued to perform (as can also be seen in the Upaniṣads). The fawn nibbled the oblations meant for the o ering, thus polluting them. Vedic sacri ces are rigidly bound by regulations pertaining to purity and pollution.

28. The sense here is that owing to some impious or negative actions performed earlier in this or a previous life, Bharata's just fruit or *karmic* reaction manifested in the form of the deer intruding into his life and distracting him from his practices.

29. As noted previously, one attains the same state in which one is absorbed at the moment of death (*Gītā* VIII.6). The idea is that one's strongest attachments arise in the mind as one is being separated from these objects of attachment during the processs of dying, and these partly determine one's future bodies.

30. The memories of a previous birth normally become dormant in the subsequent birth, and while these memories may exert subconscious in uences, they are generally obscured by *tamas*. Because of the devotion Bharata performed before he developed his attachment to the fawn, he was able to retain the memories of his past birth when he became a deer himself.

31. The *śālagrāma* is a sacred stone worshipped by Vaiṣṇavas as a self-manifest form of Viṣṇu Himself. It is found in most Vaiṣṇava temples.

32. Bathing in holy rivers puri es one's *karma*, so the implication is that even as a deer Bharata did everything he could to bring a speedy end to the *karma* that was causing him to be con ned in that body, by living in a holy place and taking baths in the sacred river there.

33. The orthodox *brāhmaṇa* caste is considered to comprise eight lineages associated with legendary sages such as Aṅgirā.

34. These are the qualities of the ideal *brāhmaṇa* (see *Gītā* XVIII.42 and throughout).

35. This is a reference to the sacred thread bestowed on *brāhmaṇas* upon completing their Vedic studies. It is worn across the left shoulder, diagonally looping down the right side. The sacred *gāyatrī mantra* is recited with the thumb wrapped in the bottom of this loop thrice daily.

36. After this ceremony, the *āvartana, brāhmaṇa* males, are married. The sense here is that the father did not go so far as to marry his son, owing to his apparent retarded state.

37. The *gayatrī* is an invocation to the sun god and begins, *"Oṁ bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ,"* the higher, middle, and lower regions of the universe that is

illuminated by the sun. This is the *mantra* chanted three times daily by *brāhmaṇas,* as indicated in the note above.

The idea is that Bharata could not even learn the twenty-eight syllables of this *mantra* in four months, such was his commitment to appearing retarded so that people would neglect him, thus minimizing his chances of again forming attachments.

38. The sense is that the wife, here referred to as Satī (see the story of Satī in *Bhāgavata* IV.2 .), entered onto the funeral pyre of the husband. This was a voluntary practice in ancient India, usually undertaken by the wives of certain warrior communities who did not wish to live without their husbands but rather chose to follow them to their next destination.

39. The three Vedas —*Ṛg, Sāma, Atharva*—are chanted during the Vedic re sacri ces.

These sacri ces are usually performed to obtain worldly boons from the celestial beings. The later Vedic texts (see *Muṇḍaka* I.2 and *Gītā* II.42 .) decry the performance of such sacri ces as foolish, since the boons they provide are temporary and materialistic. A similar critique is intended in this verse.

40. This is a standard and ubiquitous trope in philosophical discourse: the mind is subject to the dualities of such things as honor and dishonor, happiness and distress; and the body to dualities of hot and cold, pain and pleasure (see *Gītā* II.14 and 38). Thus, one who identi es the self with the body and mind believes that one is happy or distressed, according to the dualities. One who is absorbed in the bliss of the *ātman*, however, which is pure consciousness and a completely di erent entity from the nonconscious material mind and body that envelops it, transcends these eeting dualities.

41. The Goddess Kālī, whose worship is today most prominent in East India, is a ferocious form of the Goddess—although she is seen as benevolent (*bhadra*) and motherly to her less *tāmasic* devotees who understand the higher spiritual lessons she imparts through this form. She accepts blood sacri ce in certain contexts. The English word “thug”

actually comes from colonial India, where it is derived from a community following ghastly religious practices such as the one referred to in this verse.

42. In other words, their minds were enveloped in greed, ignorance, darkness, violence, and delusion.

43. The companions of the Goddess Kālī, in the *Devī Māhātmya*, are female *śāktis* emanating from the bodies of the primary Gods as well as from the Goddess herself (chapter 8).

44. The term *paramahaṁsa*, supreme swan, used for the enlightened *yogī*, points to the swan's reputed ability to separate milk from water in its beak, an analogy to the realized sage who can distinguish spirit from matter.

45. *Saṁskāras* such as desires prompt action, *karma*, which produces reactions such as the body referenced here.

46. Although *yogīs* burn up all latent seeds of *karma* that have not yet been activated but are lying in storage for future births, *sañcita karma*, and (since they are free of ignorance, ego, and desire) no longer make fresh ongoing *karma*, *sañcīyamāna karma*, they do have to burn up whatever *karma* had already been activated at birth for that particular life, the *prārabdha karma* mentioned here (a clear expression of this principle is found in the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* LXVII). Hence Bharata was content to again take up the palanquin with this in mind.

47. The term used here, *jñāna-kalā-avatīrṇa*, points to Kapila as an incarnation who descends to teach Sāṅkhya metaphysics, the oldest metaphysical system in the Vedic tradition (see his teachings in this volume). Considered by tradition to be the founder of Sāṅkhya, He therefore especially manifests the knowledge aspect of Viṣṇu's Being.

As discussed in "De nition of *Īśvara*, *Bhagavān*, and *Brahman*," the de nition of *Bhagavān* is that of the Being who possesses all six qualities in fullness, and some incarnations are speci c manifestations of one of these qualities in particular. Kapila is a *jñāna* incarnation.

48. The king is essentially saying that even if one is *ātman*, the body still exists and so does its experience of fatigue on some level; it cannot be fully illusory.

49. The same dismissive language *veda-vāda* is used here as in the *Gītā* (II.42–46), which likewise criticizes those addicted to Vedic rituals. These rituals, from the earlier Vedic period, are essentially undertaken to secure material gain from higher powers—the Vedic gods. They represent materialistic religiosity—the performance of seemingly religious acts to a higher power, but with a motive of satisfying one's material desires pertaining to one's body and mind. From the perspective of the *ātman*-focused teachings expressed in the later Vedic texts, the Upaniṣads (see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 3.8.10; *Muṇḍaka* I.2.6–13), such ritualistic enterprises are therefore acts stemming from ignorance of the true self and of no interest to real seekers of Truth. Hence Bharata criticizes them here and in the next verse.

50. The Vedānta tradition considers the Upaniṣads the *anta*, "conclusion," or higher teachings of the Veda (hence their name, *Veda-anta*).

51. *Vāsanās* are *saṁskāras* from past lives that exert subconscious in uence on the mind (see *Yoga Sūtras* IV.8, IV.24).

52. The various categories emanating from primordial *prakṛti* in the Sāṅkhya tradition are enumerated di erently in di erent schools, the most common schema being the twenty-four evolutes. The sixteen noted here, in resonance with *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*

(XXII .) and *Yoga Sūtras* (II.19), are those from these twenty-four that do not produce any further evolutes from themselves.

53. As the *Gītā* says, the mind is both the friend and the enemy of the living entity (VI.5).

Ultimately, both bondage and liberation are states of mind (*Sāṅkhya Kārikā* LXII–

LXIII), since the *ātman* is eternally pure and distinct. The *ātman* here is referred to as *kṣetra-jña*, the “ eld-knower.” *Prakṛti* is the eld of activities but does not “know”—

that is, it is unconscious matter—while the *ātman* as the source of consciousness is

“the knower” (chapter 14 of the *Gītā* is about the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetra-jña*).

54. We nd here a di erent schema from the ve *vṛttis* of *Yoga Sūtras* (I.5–11). However, as will be seen from the subsequent verses, these are simply schematic di erences, not substantial metaphysical ones. There were numerous Sāṅkhya systems in circulation (the *Bhāgavata* mentions several and even notes a variant view in verse 12), given that di erent sages organized the various evolutes of *prakṛti* di erently (re ected here in the two di erent views noted in verses 9 and 10). But all accepted the same basic categories and shared the ultimate goal of establishing the distinction of the *ātman* from both the mind, senses, and sense objects.

55. Compare *Yoga Sūtras* II.21. One of the arguments used in philosophical discourse to establish the existence of an *ātman*, re ected here, is that the organs of actions and the knowledge-acquiring senses are precisely that—organs and instruments. And instruments exist for the usage of some other entity: they do not exist for themselves.

56. Compare *Yoga Sūtras* I.4 and II.20.

57. In *Bhāgavata* theology (as re ected, for instance, in Vaiṣṇava readings of *Gītā* XV.16–

19; *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* IV.4.6), there are two *ātmans* in every embodied being: one is the *ātman* who is the “enjoyer” of experience, who is projected into that body in accordance with the established laws of *karma*; the other is a form of Viṣṇu (*Antaryāmin*) . In other words, Viṣṇu also manifests a personal presence within every embodied *ātman*, which permeates the *ātman* as ether permeates other elements and directs the *ātman* according to the desires it manifests in its mind.

58. We can recall that the king is thinking the *brāhmaṇa* to be Kapila, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and thus the cause of the universe, disguising his real nature.

59. These are the *mahābhūtas* of Sāṅkhya (and, for that matter, Vaiśeṣiká): the smallest irreducible individualized gross particles (*aṇus*) of earth, water, re, air, and ether (irreducible in Vaiśeṣiká, although in Sāṅkhya, while these are the smallest individualized entities, they can in fact be further reduced to subtler energies such as the *tanmātras* and, ultimately the nest material essence of everything, the three *guṇas*). The term "atom" for *aṇu* was assigned by early Indologists, since "atom" was the smallest known particle at the time. With the discovery in physics of quarks and other such things, the term is no longer accurate, hence my (still unsatisfactory) rendering of the terms as "subatomic" particles, in an attempt to cover any future such discoveries! (Ironically, the Greek etymology of the term "atom" also in fact refers to the smallest possible entity along similar lines to the term *aṇu*.) 60. This dense verse actually contains standard philosophical concepts. The world of

"dualities" is a way of thinking about external reality—things are distinguished from other things along spectrums such as thin and fat and all variants in between.

Ultimately, all reality is a manifestation of *prakṛti*, which consists of the three *guṇas*, so things di er from other things only in terms of the proportionality of these *guṇas*.

Prakṛti manifests in the form of some of the features listed here (which are technical terms of the Indic philosophical traditions): *dravya* are the smallest material substances such as the subatomic particles; *svabhāva*, the essential nature of things (such as liquidity of water); *āśaya*, the reservoir of an individual's *karma*, stored in the subconscious mind, which eventually produces its fruits (*Yoga Sūtras* II.15); *kāla*, the Time factor, which brings the reservoir of *karma* to its fruition in due course; and *karma*, an individual's actual actions themselves, which bear corresponding fruits.

61. Vāsudeva is a name of Kṛṣṇa. As noted in the *Gītā* (VII.19), after many births, a wise person realizes that everything is Vāsudeva.

62. This refers to a practice of extreme asceticism where the *yogī* sits in ice-cold water during the winter and in a circle of several res in the midday sun of the summer. The idea is to remove consciousness from its attachment and identi cation with the body and its sensations.

63. In the Vaiṣṇava traditions, love of God is attained only through the medium of the saintly *guru* (see "*Satsaṅga* and the *Guru*").

64. This refers to the enticements of Vedic ritual (see *Yoga Sūtras* I.15 for identical wordage), as expressed more explicitly in *Gītā* II.42–46 and the Upaniṣads (previous citation). The idea is that the successful *yogī* must be free not only from desires for things experienced in this material world, but also from the enticements of the Vedic scriptures themselves (speci cally the *karma khāṇḍa* ritualistic sections, promoting a higher grade of embodied existence in the next life in the subtle celestial realms for those with exceptional *karma*).

65. Śrīdhara states that these are trees whose shade is considered to be inauspicious.

66. *Yakṣas* are a type of superhuman being usually found in forests and other natural settings.

67. The idea here is that, overwhelmed by desire due to relike *rajas*, a person seeks gold.

But since gold is a by-product of the smelting process of re, it can be analogized as a type of stool excreted by re and therefore a toxic, noxious, and deadly substance.

68. Since the person is miserly, he does not enjoy the wealth in this world, and since it is not put to proper use for *dharma* as indicated in a prior verse, it is not conducive to a good destination in the next world.

69. Even if one does good deeds, if one does not know the *ātman*, one still needs to return to embodied existence to receive the good fruits. So, ultimately, all embodiment is su ering for the wise (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.15).

70. Devadatta and Viṣṇumitra are the standard names used in Sanskrit commentaries to denote an average person in general.

71. Time is the movement of matter. The *aṇu* is the smallest unit of gross (*mahābhūta*) matter. The time it takes for one atom to move to its immediately adjacent space is the smallest unit of recordable time, the *kṣaṇa*. At the other end of the Time spectrum, the universe is dissolved at the end of Brahmā's life, so this is the largest unit of Time.

72. The *Śruti* is the Vedic corpus, and *Smṛti* is derivative post-Vedic literature (see appendix 1).

73. Almost all *mokṣa* traditions hold ignorance, *avidyā*, as the cause of *saṁsara*, the place where it begins (see, for instance, *Yoga Sūtras* II.4, 12, 24). Therefore, returning to this originating principle and removing it by *vidyā* (knowledge, *viveka*) removes *saṁsāra* (*Yoga Sūtras* II.25–26).

74. This refers to a previous incarnation of Viṣṇu, Hayagrīva, who killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, after the latter stole the Vedas and hid them in the ocean (referred to in VII.9.37).

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book VI

1. In the *Yoga Sūtras,* even as one can x the mind on an object "according to one's inclination" (I.39), *japa,* the repetition of the name of *Īśvara* (I.27–28), is prioritized.

This can be inferred by dint of the fact that *japa* heads the list of objects upon which the mind can be xed in concentration (*ālambanas*), which according to traditional hermeneutics indicates superiority over other items on the list. Additionally, *Īśvara* as *ālambana* receives eight verses where the ve other suggested *ālambanas* receive only one each. Moreover, only *Īśvara* can bestow liberation, where other objects cannot (II.45). Thus Patañjali is tactfully but clearly prioritizing this form of practice.

2. It can be noted, however, that the hells in Hindu and Buddhist cosmographies are temporary places, where torment is in icted on beings as e ects in exact proportionality to the causal acts that generate them (see

Yoga Sūtras II.14). Once the requisite bad *karma* causing one to spend time there has been accounted for, one moves on to one's next due birth, regaining another chance at a human form.

3. The types of negative *karma* performed by humans, and the corresponding hellish realms with their torments that are their appropriate consequences, are outlined in the fth book of the *Bhāgavata*.

4. The commentators elaborate that one might have seen punishment being meted out by the king and heard about the hellish regions from scriptures.

5. This well-used simile points to the fact that the elephant, immediately after taking his bath, rolls in the sand again, rendering any cleansing useless: thus, suggests the king, with atonement.

6. One might counteract the e ects of bad *karma* by atonement, but the roots of sin—desire and the like (the *kleśas*, *Yoga Sūtras* II.3 .)—remain, so one reengages in bad *karma* all over again. As long as one is ignorant of the true self and thinks one is body/mind, one is inevitably bound by desires to enjoy the body/mind, which all too easily leads to again engaging in bad *karma*. Hence the real solution is knowledge of the true self, which eradicates desire at its roots (*Yoga Sūtras* II.4.24–25).

7. The sense here is that a subtle residue of liquor remains embedded in the liquor pot even after washing, just as the root *saṁskāras* of desire themselves remain latent, even if the mind undertakes atonement for the *karma* created by attempting to ful ll them.

8. From as early as the *Praśna Upaniṣad* (III.6), the *ātman* is said to abide in the region of the heart, as does the mind and subtle body.

9. Of the ve types of liberation in Vaiṣṇavism, one is *sārūpya*, having the same form as Viṣṇu, such as His messengers, here (see "The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*" for discussion).

10. See *Yoga Sūtras* II.14. The "fruit" of action denotes the *karmic* consequences.

11. The present is a consequence of the past and cause of the future and can thus provide a sense of both of these; so with a person's actions (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.12–14).

12. See earlier note for the ve *karmendriyas*.

13. We have followed Śrīdhara in taking "the three" to refer to the ingredients outlined in verse 50, but the three could also refer to the three *guṇas* and their products.

14. While the gross body consisting of the ve gross atomic elements (earth, water, re, air, and ether) is discarded at death, the *ātman* soul remains embodied in the subtle body, which consists of the knowledge-acquiring senses and the powers behind the organs of action, noted in verse 50. This subtle body, which transmigrates with the *ātman* birth after birth, is called variously *liṅga* (as in this verse), *sūkṣma śarīra*, or *antaḥkaraṇa* (or four from the ve, *kośas*).

15. The sense here is that, bewildered as to one's real nature, one acts. Bound by the reactions of these acts and, hence, constantly a icted by inexplicable events unceasingly thrust upon one (in the form of *karmic* fruits), one can see no way out of one's material predicament.

16. This verse is found, verbatim, in *Gītā* III.5.

17. One acts according to one's nature and thus generates corresponding reactions of *karma*, but one's initial nature is itself the product of previous *karma*.

18. This is almost verbatim in *Gītā* III.21.

19. In the *Gītā* (II.45), Kṛṣṇa informs Arjuna that the Vedas deal with goals connected with the three *guṇas*—that is, the normative goal of Vedic culture and of Vedic ritualism is righteous behavior, the fruits of which are the attainment of material prosperity in this life and in the celestial realms of the next (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*). Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to rise above these goals and strive for higher goals (*mokṣa*).

20. For the various types of hell, see V.26.

21. Although the term *svarūpa* here is used by Patañjali in a generic sense to refer to the *ātman* (*Yoga Sūtras* I.3), it takes on an extended sense in the *Bhāgavata* tradition. As discussed in “The Liberated *Bhakta*,” the liberated *ātman* in the *Bhāgavata* receives a divine *Brahman* form upon attaining Vaikuṇṭha or Goloka, also called *svarūpa*.

22. This is a reference to activities performed under the three *guṇas*.

23. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III.6 for the metaphor of the universe being woven.

24. For the term *aṁśa*, see earlier citation (and “Who Is the Supreme *Īśvara*?: The Purāṇic Context”).

25. Kṛṣṇa states in the *Gītā* (IV.13) that He created the *varṇāśrama*—the system of four social occupations and four orders of life.

26. These are all di erent kinds of celestial beings.

27. From the ve di erent types of liberated states or attainments in the *Bhāgavata* tradition, the one noted here, *sārūpya*, involves being bestowed the same form as Viṣṇu (see “The Liberated *Bhakta*”).

28. These are the twelve *mahājanas*, the only beings who fully understand *Bhāgavata dharma*.

29. The three sacred res are the *āhavanīya*, o ertorial re; *dakṣināgni*, southern re; and *gārhapatya*, householder re.

30. See *Gītā* II.42 for the owery words of the Vedas.

31. This and the next verse is a rewording of *Gītā* VII.3.

32. See *Bhāgavata* VI.6–9 for the story of Vṛtra.

33. One version of how Indra’s body is covered with eyes is recounted in the *Mahābhārata* I.203.

34. Literally ten million. This is an example of *atiśayokti* or *vakrokti*, exaggeration, in Sanskrit poetics (discussed, for example, in the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana).

35. See the Sāṅkhya chart in appendix 2 for the various coverings that constitute the subtle body of an individual.

36. These are listed in Manu's *Dharma Śāstra* (9.294–95).

37. In the older Vedic traditions, o spring were required to perform o erings (*piṇḍa*) to their departed ancestors at set times, in order to deliver them from hell or other unpleasant afterlife experiences.

38. Tvaṣṭā is a *prajāpati* (progenitor).

39. Subrahmaṇya was the son of Śiva, but the latter's semen was preserved by Agni, god of re, and he was nursed by the six Kṛttikās (*Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa* 37).

40. See earlier note.

41. *Artha* here, among its many meanings, can denote an object of the senses and is glossed by Śrīdhara with earth and the like—that is, the *mahābhūta* atoms perceivable to the senses. Although such atoms in Sāṅkhya (contra Nyāya) are themselves not eternal, since they are products of successively more subtle levels of matter, their ultimate substructure, the *guṇas*, is eternal.

42. The rst part of this verse is not entirely clear, given the generic *yoga* position that as a result of discrimination one precisely does realize the distinction between the *ātman* and the body. But it could be suggesting that only the *ātman* is real; the body is ephemeral (or, perhaps, that everything is ultimately the nondual *Brahman*). With regard to the second part, in the school of Nyāya, the logicians, reality is conceived of consisting of seven ultimate and irreducible entities. Two of these are referred to here: an object consists of atoms, which have individuators, a category of reality that preserves their eternal individuality (namely, that prevents them from, for example, merging or dissolving into something else), and a universal

“cowness” that allows them to be situated in classes of things (namely, an essence allowing one cow to be grouped with others, and to be perceived as cowness or cowhead). Sāṅkhya traditions like that of the *Bhāgavata* oppose this view and hold that while there may be such things as individuators and universals on a surface level, they are not eternally real entities, as everything can ultimately be reduced to one entity, *prakṛti* (and its three *guṇas*).

43. This is likely a reference to Paraśurāma rather than Lord Rāma.

44. Desires are the results of past actions, *karma*, and although they are mental concoctions, and thus unreal, they nonetheless trigger further action when one strives to ful ll them. Hence the cycle of *saṁsāra* is perpetuated.

45. Saṅkarṣaṇa is a form of Viṣṇu mostly associated with the *pāñcarātrika* Vaiṣṇava traditions.

46. The term *jīva* is used to refer to the soul when it is embodied. In this case, the departed soul of the king’s son would be in its subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra*, prior to being reembodied in a gross form.

47. In other words, *Īśvara* is beyond description and mental conceptual categories.

48. The *vidyādharas* are a category of celestial beings.

49. Śeṣa is the cosmic serpent upon whom one of the manifestations of Viṣṇu reclines.

Patañjali is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa (for example, according to certain commentaries on the terms “Ananta,” another name for Śeṣa, in *Yoga Sūtras* II.47 and in the invocation to Patañjali attributed to King Bhoja).

50. The *Sātvatas*, which I have translated here as Vaiṣṇavas, are rst noted in literary sources in the *Mokṣadharma* section of the *Mahābhārata* called the *Nārāyaṇīya*, where

they are also known as the *Ekāntins*— those who are exclusively devoted to Nārāyaṇa.

51. See earlier citation for *aṁśa*.

52. In the fth book of the *Bhāgavata*, the structure of the universe is outlined. Although vast, the universe is enveloped in seven sheaths—the seven elements of Sāṅkhya (earth, water, air, re, ether, ego, and intelligence), each one ten times thicker than the previous one. Thus the sheaths of the universe are vastly more expansive than the universe itself.

53. The sense here is that normally, if one tries to ful ll worldly desires, then one is subject to their corresponding fruits of *karma* and thus is trapped by the world of dualities (like and dislike, and so on; *Gītā* II. 64)—in other words, *saṁsāra*. However, if one worships Viṣṇu, even for sel sh sensual reasons to ful ll some worldly desire—the mixed *bhakti* from part 1 ("*Bhakti* Mixed with Attachment to *Dharma* and *Jñāna*")— one is not subject to the fruits normally accruing from the laws of *karma*. Rather, one eventually becomes puri ed by such worship. This is because Viṣṇu is beyond the *guṇas* (transcendent), and thus anyone absorbed in Viṣṇu (even if originally for mundane motives) eventually also transcends the *guṇas* by dint of the puri cation ensuing from such meditation.

54. We can recall that in Vaiṣṇava philosophy the *ātman* is a part of the Supreme.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book VII

1. The sense here is that the *ātman* is the hearer behind hearing, and the speaker behind speaking, in the sense of being the consciousness that animates these functions (along the lines of the *Kena Upaniṣad I.2* .). So the body and cognitive organs the queens were attached to was still present, but the *ātman* who had animated the body had never been seen by anyone in the rst place. So for whom are they lamenting?

2. *Abhiniveśa* is the fth *kleśa* in the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.9).

3. The sense here is that since his mind was absorbed in Kṛṣṇa and he was not aware of conventional reality, he appeared possessed as if by a ghost or some negative planetary in uence.

4. Since the *asuras* are sons of Diti, they are also referred to as *daityas*.

5. The sense here is that the teaching was based on the body, not the universality of the *ātman*, and thus revolved around prioritizing one's self and one's clan, in opposition to others.

6. The household is compared with falling into a "dark well" in the ascetic traditions, as one becomes trapped by duties and responsibilities, with no clear way out.

7. See verse 19.

8. Although there are four goals of life, the *daityas* are interested in these rst three (*dharma, artha, kāma*), but not the fourth, *mokṣa*, liberation.

9. This refers to the incarnation of Varāha, who killed Hiraṇyakaśipu's brother Hiraṇyākṣa (*Bhāgavata* III.19).

10. Śunaḥśepa was sold by his father, Ajigarta, for use as a human sacri ce in exchange for one hundred cows (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* VII.13–18).

11. Varuṇa is the deity of the waters.

12. The threefold su erings are *ādhyātmika*, the su ering accruing from one's own mind and body; *ādhibhautika*, from other beings; and *ādhidaivika*, from the environment; (see *Yoga Sūtras* II.15 and commentaries).

13. For the seer and seen, see *Yoga Sūtras* II.17 .

14. *Siddhis*, mystic powers, can also be attained by *tapas*, austerity (see *Yoga Sūtras* IV.1); hence, with a view of obtaining supernormal powers, many demons also performed *tapas*, such as Rāvaṇa of the Rāmāyaṇa.

15. The eight are *prakṛti*, intelligence, ego, and the ve subtle qualities (see *Gītā* VII.4). The sixteen are the eleven senses and the ve gross elements (see the Sāṅkhya chart in appendix 2).

16. The Vedānta process of *neti neti*, "it is not this, it is not that," is a method of approaching *ātman*/ *Brahman* by negating everything that it is not—namely, all objects of consciousness (see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II.3.6).

17. *Anvaya-vyatireka* is a form of logical analysis, where something is established based on both the concomitance and the absence of some other thing that is inseparable from it

(for example, wherever there is smoke there is re and wherever there is no re there is no smoke).

18. See the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* for the four states of consciousness.

19. The term used here is *svarūpa* (as in *Yoga Sūtras* I.3).

20. The ten directions are N, S, W, E, NE, NW, SE, SW, up, and down.

21. The *cakra*, a disclike weapon, is speci c to Viṣṇu. The commentators mention the *vajra*, mostly associated with Indra, as a weapon common to others.

22. See the Tale and Teachings of Lord Brahmā.

23. In Purāṇic cosmography, the ten cardinal points mentioned earlier are guarded by celestial elephants.

24. Where bowing or kneeling denotes respect or submission in the Western epic tradition, the utmost honor a orded to someone in the Indian tradition, which is still exhibited in devotional contexts, is laying the entire body down with arms extended in front, *daṇḍavat*, "like a stick."

25. See the Tale of the Elephant *Bhakta*.

26. These are listed in the *Mahābhārata* (V.43.12) as knowledge, truthfulness, control, tranquillity, freedom from malice, modesty, tolerance, freedom from envy, charity, performance of sacri ce, austerity, and sacred learning.

27. The idea here is that the mind is predisposed toward ful lling desire. In Vedic India, the sanctioned manner of ful lling certain desires was through Vedic ritualism.

28. According to the *Yoga Sūtras*, the instruments of perception and sense objects of the world are presented so that the *puruṣa* can seek enjoyment (II.18).

29. This is a reference to the ritualistic part of the Vedic corpus (the earlier *Mantra* and *Brāhmaṇa* texts), which pertains to the performance of sacri ces for the good things of life in this world and the attainment of the celestial realms in the next. The *mokṣa* traditions such as the *Bhāgavata* here decry such materialistic religiosity (see, for instance, *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* I.2.6 . and *Gītā* II.42 .).

30. This is a reference to the *kalpa-vṛkṣa*, a tree said to be found in the celestial realms, which ful lls any wish presented to it by the supplicant.

31. In the cosmology of the *Bhāgavata*, the universe is periodically partially dissolved into its subtlest causal ingredients and eventually completely dissolved, during which it rests within its ultimate cause, Viṣṇu, before a new cycle of creation takes place. See *Bhāgavata* book 2, and *Gītā* VIII.17.

32. These four states, rst expressed in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, are waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and enlightenment.

33. This type of discourse sometimes switches from “Him” to “You,” as a speaker may be speaking to one form of Viṣṇu, as Prahlāda is doing here, about another form of the same Supreme Being.

34. Ananta is the cosmic serpent Śeṣa. In a verse rst found in the eleventh-century commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras* of King Bhoja, Patañjali is

considered an incarnation of Śeṣa. It is upon this thousand-hooded snake that Viṣṇu reclines on the waters of dissolution.

35. In Sāṅkhya metaphysics, each of the ve gross atomic elements (the *mahābhūtas* of earth, water, re, air, and ether) has a quality associated with it (the *tanmātras* of smell, taste, sight, touch, and sound, respectively), from which it is generated and therefore by which it is inseparably pervaded. The analogy here indicates that all manifest reality is an inseparable evolute of the nest of all essences, *Īśvara*.

36. In II.1.25 . and 3.5 ., the various limbs of this particular divine manifestation are each associated with speci c realms of the universe.

37. This barely mentioned incarnation is Hayagrīva (noted in passing in II.7.5).

38. Madhu and Kaiṭabha were two demons who stole the Vedas (see previous reference).

Although this story is mentioned but not presented in the *Bhāgavata*, it was a well-known narrative (in fact, one of Kṛṣṇa's most common names is Madhusūdana, "killer of Madhu"). It is outlined in the *Mahābhārata* (book 12) and *Devī Bhāgavata* (book 10).

39. See *Gītā* IV.7–8.

40. There are four *yugas*, and each of the rst three has an incarnation associated with it.

This verse suggests the possibility of a concealed incarnation (*channa*), which the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school takes to be an indirect reference to Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who was born in Bengal in the fteenth century and spread the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* throughout parts of India, especially East India. The distinctive feature of Gauḍīya or Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, then, in the greater context of Vaiṣṇavism in general, is this acceptance of Caitanya Mahāprabhu as Kṛṣṇa Himself.

41. The *Vaitaraṇī* river borders the realm of Yama, lord of death.

42. In Sāṅkhya, *prakṛti* is nothing other than the three *guṇas*, from which all reality evolves in sequential fashion. The rst evolute is *buddhi* (*mahat*) , followed by ego, mind, the powers of the ten organs, the ve qualities (sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell), and the ve primordial elements (see Sāṅkhya chart in appendix 2).

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book VIII

1. All forms of gross matter are ultimately made of the ve *mahābhūtas*—the elements of earth, water, re, air, and ether. At the time of universal dissolution, forms dissolve into their atomic constituents (and then into subtler and subtler energies, until everything dissolves back into the *prakṛtic* matrix). See Sāṅkhya chart in appendix 2.

2. Anything made of *prakṛti* has some sort of identi able form (*rūpa*) and, therefore, is nameable (*nāma*), albeit both of these are temporal and in this sense ephemeral.

Īśvara, of course, is transcendent and therefore beyond *nāma-rūpa*.

3. It is standard in eulogies of this sort to slip between "He" and "You" pronominal forms.

The sense is: "He who is known as the Supreme Being (etc., etc.) is none other than You."

4. *Kṣetra-jña* (see, for example, *Gītā* XIII.3 and throughout).

5. As the *ātman* can be re ected in the pure mirror of the mind, so can *Īśvara* in His creation.

6. These portions, the *karma kāṇḍa*, deal with satisfying material desires (see "*Bhakti* and *Dharma*").

7. This "inner Seer" is taken by the commentators and *Bhāgavata* philosophy to be one of the manifestations of Viṣṇu who resides in every being as the *Antaryāmī*

(*Paramātman*), the inner controller.

8. The Vedic goals of conventional life (see earlier citation).

9. This is a reference to one of the ve forms of liberation outlined in the *Bhāgavata* (see

“The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*”).

10. For *kalā* (or *aṁśa*), see earlier citation.

11. The sense here is something akin to verses in the *Gītā* (see VII.21 and X.4–5, 10), where Kṛṣṇa states that it is He who provides the appropriate intelligence to all beings that accords with their desires (and appropriate *karma*). For intelligence di erentiated by the *guṇas*, see *Gītā* (XVIII.29–32).

12. Gajendra did not address his prayers to a speci c *Iśvara* such as Śiva or Viṣṇu.

13. Śrīdhara refers to *itihāsa* (probably the *Mahābhārata*) for the source of this story: Once, the sage Devala was frolicking in a lake with some damsels, when the celestial Hūhū

entered the lake, grabbed him by the leg, and pulled him. Devala became enraged and cursed him to become an alligator. Relenting somewhat later, he advised him to grasp the leg of the elephant after he had taken his alligator birth, so that he would be released by Hari (curses often bear some sort of similarity to the o ense that provokes them; they are rarely retracted but can be modi ed).

14. *Sārūpya* liberation. See “The Liberated *Bhakta*” for the ve types of liberated states in *Bhāgavata* theology.

15. We see here a good example of the layerings of stories: present situations are the e ects of causes in previous lives, a literary and pedagogical trait so typical of epic and Purāṇic narrative.

16. Compare with the Tale of King Bharata, when the latter was in the body of a deer.

17. This is a reference to Viṣṇu when reclining on the ocean of milk, from whose navel a lotus grows (see the Tale and Teachings of Lord Brahmā).

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Book IX

1. The *aśvamedha* (horse) sacri ce was performed by the *kṣatriya* warrior caste and was essentially a display of power. It had various functions—for example, for a king with imperatorial aspirations, the horse, followed by the king's army, was let loose to wander through adjacent kingdoms, requiring the neighboring king to either capture it and confront the army or allow it passage and thereby submit to paying tribute. The performance of one hundred *aśvamedhas* generated su cient *karma* for one to attain the post of the celestial Indra in one's next birth.

2. One of the characteristics of a celestial is that he or she does not blink (additionally, their garlands do not fade, and their feet do not touch the ground).

3. Sacri ces such as the *aśvamedha* are usually motivated by a desire to attain the celestial realms.

4. The *dvādaśī* fast occurs on the twelfth day of the waxing as well as of the waning moon.

5. *Abhiṣeka* involves ritual bathing of a deity—often using various liquids including milk, yogurt, ghee, and honey in addition to water—and, on occasion, of other esteemed personages such as the king at his coronation.

6. The text uses the rhetorical number of six *nyarbuda*, six hundred million.

7. At the end of the universal cycle, a re consumes the universe (see *Bhāgavata* XII.4).

8. This corresponds to the duration of Brahmā's life.

9. See "The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*."

10. Eating the remnants of a saint's food (or that of the deity) is called *prasādam* and is considered very purifying.

11. As indicated in the *Yoga Sūtras* (IV.1), mystic powers can accrue in various ways, two of which, referenced here, are through the power of *mantra* and through austerities (*tapas*). Through these means, Saubhari, as was the case with Kardama, was able to create the palaces and such, described here.

12. See the *Gītā* (III.9), where feeding desire is compared with putting fuel on the re, which simply causes it to rage more intensely.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Incarnation: Book X

1. Adapted from Bryant (2003).

2. Vasudeva is the father, Vāsudeva is the son (Kṛṣṇa). See note 17 below.

3. Kṛṣṇa is here exhibiting His form as Viṣṇu.

4. We can recall that in Vaiṣṇavism, *Īśvara*'s body is made not of *prakṛti*, but of pure *Brahman.*

5. Kṛṣṇa incarnates because many *asuras*, demons, had taken birth on earth masquerading as kings.

6. This period corresponds to half of Brahmā's life: ten billion human years.

7. In Sāṅkhya, all the evolutes of *prakṛti*, the manifest, dissolve into their *prakṛtic* matrix, the unmanifest.

8. There is a partial dissolution of the universe at the end of Brahmā's night and also at the end of his day. The complete dissolution occurs at the end of his life of one hundred years (see note 6 above).

9. Each day of Brahmā is divided into fourteen periods, each one governed by a di erent Manu (progenitor).

10. This refers to the Vāmana incarnation discussed previously with reference to Bali, king of the demons.

11. Yogamāyā is both personality and power. Here, she is the personal Goddess.

12. See previous references to Śeṣa, the snake upon whom Viṣṇu reclines.

13. We encountered Yama in the story of Ajāmila.

14. This is a reference to Rāma crossing the sea to rescue Sītā.

15. There is an astronomical text, the *Garga Saṁhitā*, of which only fragments remain, associated with this sage.

16. These are references to previous incarnations.

17. There are various rules for the creation of patronymics in Sanskrit grammar, one of which is to extend the initial vowel of the parent's name. Thus Vāsudeva is the son of Vasudeva.

18. In other words, Yaśodā saw the various evolutes of *prakṛti* in accordance with Sāṅkhya metaphysics.

19. This is a reference to various demons who tried to kill Kṛṣṇa in previous chapters.

20. This is a reference to Pūtanā, a demon who assumed the form of a beautiful woman and tried to kill Kṛṣṇa by suckling him on her poisoned breast in X.6.

21. This is a reference to the Tṛṇāvarta demon who assumes the form of a whirlwind to kill Kṛṣṇa in X.7.

22. See earlier citation.

23. See discussion in the chapter "Meditating in Enmity," note 36, on this type of liberation attained by Agha.

24. See “The Liberated *Bhakta*: Di erent Types of *Mokṣa* in the *Bhāgavata*.”

25. This refers to the fact that Kṛṣṇa saved Parīkṣit in the womb, when Parīkṣit was about to be incinerated by the *brahmāstra* weapon released against him while still an embryo so as to destroy the last remaining member of the Kuru dynasty.

26. The mothers of the other *gopa* boys in the village, as well as the cows, had all secretly harbored the wish that Kṛṣṇa had been their very own son or calf.

27. The commentator Śrīdhara does not give a reference for this quote.

28. While the parents of the other *gopas* and the cows loved their own children and calves, this love did not compare with their love for Kṛṣṇa, which was unlimited.

29. See “The Practices of *Bhakti*,” note 49.

30. Here again we have a reference to the non- *prakṛtic* but rather *Brahman* nature of Viṣṇu’s forms.

31. These eleven are the mind, the ve knowledge-acquiring senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, touch), and the ve working senses (arms, legs, genitals, anus, skin).

32. See previous reference for the *neti neti* of the Upaniṣads.

33. Brahmā has four heads. There are various stories as to how he attained these in the Purāṇas.

34. The imagery of the universe being woven like a cloth on threads goes back at least to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III.8).

35. *Daṇḍavat*: a full prostration on the ground with arms elongated.

36. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (VI.9) says that the eating of grains by one who has been consecrated should not occur until the performance of the sacri ce. The *sautrāmaṇī*

was a four-day sacri ce to Indra as protector,

37. The *patnīśālā*, women's quarter, was situated in the southwest corner of the *vedī*, or sacri cial arena.

38. Foods are divided as to whether they are licked, swallowed, chewed, or sucked.

39. The participation of the wife was required in certain Vedic rituals.

40. Kṛṣṇa makes numerous statements such as "Abandon all types of *dharma* and simply come exclusively to My shelter; I will free you from all sin, do not worry" (*Gītā*

XVIII.66); and "Those who take shelter of Me, even if they be of sinful birth, women, merchants, or laborers, attain the supreme destination" (*Gītā* IX.32).

41. Śrīdhara considers these to be birth from parents, initiation as a *brāhmaṇa* in the sacred-thread ceremony, and initiation for the performance of sacri ce.

42. There are twelve puri catory rites of passage, *saṁskāras* (not to be confused with the word's meaning as memory imprint), incumbent on a male *brāhmaṇa*.

43. Śrīdhara considers these faults to be pride and ckleness: *cañcalā* means the ckle one, since fame and fortune do not stay with anyone for long!

44. Cupid.

45. Both pious and impious deeds are the source of bondage, since both require rebirth in order to fructify.

46. In other words, since their physical bodies were obstructed by their relatives from leaving the house, these *gopīs* simply abandoned their bodies and kept going in their subtle bodies to be with Kṛṣṇa.

47. See discussion in “Meditating in Enmity” on meditation on Kṛṣṇa in enmity and hate.

48. Tulasī is both plant and goddess.

49. Urukrama is Vāmana. See earlier citation.

50. Varāha is the boar incarnation.

51. See note 20 above.

52. This is a reference to Kṛṣṇa’s banishing of the Kāliya serpent for poisoning the *Yamunā*

river in X.16.

53. This refers to the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa swallowing the forest re in X.17.

54. Incarnations typically have such markings on their hands and feet.

55. The word for “worshipped” here is *ārādhitaḥ*, the past passive participle of the verb *ārādh*, “to worship.” Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentators see this as a veiled reference to Rādhā, a nominal form of this root, which is the name of Kṛṣṇa’s primary consort, who is otherwise not mentioned in the text.

56. This verse is not found in Śrīdhara but is in a number of other versions.

57. Ariṣṭa and Vyomasura were demons killed by Kṛṣṇa in earlier chapters of the tenth book.

58. The idea here is that because one has eyelids, one blinks and, in so doing, is deprived of beholding Kṛṣṇa’s beautiful form even if only for a split second.

59. This is a reference to conventional *samādhi*.

60. According to the commentator Śrīdhara, the Vedas, who are both texts and personalities, remain unful lled in their ritualistic portions, which

pertain to satisfying material desires, but experience bliss in their Upaniṣadic portions, which pertain to the *ātman*.

61. This is not to be confused with *rasa*, discussed in "*Rāga*, *Bhāva*, and *Rasa*."

62. This is a reference to Viṣṇu, whose eternal consort is Lakṣmī, also known as Śrī.

63. See *Gītā* IV.8, where Kṛṣṇa proclaims that He incarnates to reestablish *dharma.*

64. When the gods and the demons churned the ocean of milk, poison was produced as well as valuable things. Śiva drank the poison, as a result of which his throat turned blue (*Bhāgavata* VIII.6–9).

65. The *rāsa līlā* is held to have lasted for the duration of Brahmā's night (for which, see earlier note).

Caitanya's *Śikṣāṣṭakam*: The Eight Verses of Instruction

1. The imagery here is that as the *kairava* is a night-blooming lotus that is nourished by the moon, while other conventional day-blooming lotuses are asleep, so those who chant the names of Kṛṣṇa are awakened to love of God while most entities are asleep under the in uence of *avidyā*.

2. See the Tale of Prince Dhruva (IV.12.18) for examples of similar symptoms.

The *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*

1. For discussion on *yogamāyā* and lack of awareness of God's majesty, see "*Līlā* and *Yogamāyā*."

2. The other practices—Vedic ritualistic specializations, knowledge, and the practice of *yoga*—are to a great extent based on the performer's ego and virtuosity in the techniques of these elds. *Bhakti* involves complete surrender of one's ego and thus involves humility.

3. For *bhakti* under the in uence of the *guṇas*, see discussion in "*Bhakti* Mixed with *Karma* and *Jñāna*."

4. See discussion in "*Rāga*, *Bhāva*, and *Rasa*" on *bhāva*.

5. These three could refer, among other possibilities, to the paths of *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti*.

Appendix I

1. The di erent recensions of the Vedas have been transmitted remarkably intact across the millennia. Indeed, their e cacy as ritualistic texts that can produce tangible e ects in the real world (that is, produce the boons associated with sacri cial performance) was held to depend upon the precise preservation and pronunciation of each phoneme.

2. See Śaṅkara on *Vedānta Sūtras* I.2.25.

3. With important di erences among the theists, including the *Bhāgavata* tradition, that hold the Vedas to have originally been articulated by *Īśvara*, God (see Gītā XV.15), and the Mīmāṁsakas, who dispense with God as philosophically super uous and consider the Vedas to be eternally existent but authorless texts (see *Ślokavārtika* 32).

4. The term *kṛṣṇa* does appear occasionally in the hymns in the *Ṛg-Veda*, but simply with its adjectival semantics of "black": there is nothing in these occurrences that allows us to connect these references to the Kṛṣṇa of the Purāṇas. In terms of the *Śruti*, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (III.17.6) of the later Vedic age (circa sixth century B.C.E.) gives us the rst plausible, but still questionable, protoreference to the Purāṇic Kṛṣṇa (see Preciado-Solis 1984 for discussion). Even the *Bhāgavata* itself acknowledges that "Kṛṣṇa's activities are not revealed in the Vedas" (I.2.35).

5. If one wishes to embark on an exposition on Truth, then clearly it is essential, from a systematic point of view, to rst establish what sources of knowledge one deems relevant to this pursuit right at the beginning of one's treatise (see *Yoga Sūtras* I.7).

6. See *Vedānta Sūtras* I.1.3 and II.1.27; *Mīmāṁsā Sūtras* II and VI–XXIII and commentaries (and in the *Bhāgavata* itself, XI.20.4).

7. It is well-known that the term “Hindu” is not to be found in Sanskrit sources but rst occurs, coincidentally, in the hagiography of Caitanya, the founder of Jīva’s lineage, mentioned above. While there have been various scholarly discussions as to what exactly the term comprises, there is general agreement that it refers to traditions that retain some sort of formal allegiance toward the Vedic *Śruti* corpus, even if only nominally, given the innovative directions the later lineages take.

8. Some schools, however, such as Vaiśeṣiká, accepted only scripture and empiricism, Nyāya arguing for four and Mīmāṁsā six distinct methods of knowing something to be true.

9. Although, in point of fact, Navadvīpa, where Caitanya was born, was at the center of new expressions of Nyāya, logic. Caitanya himself was an exceptional teacher in Nyāya prior to becoming an ecstatic (see earlier citation).

10. For *paramparā*, see also *Gītā* IV.4.

11. See II.9.

12. *Ādi parvan* I.267; and *Mokṣa dharma* 340.21.

13. Jīva does not give a reference for this verse, which is not unusual in premodern hermeneutics. However, see *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Prabhāsa-khaṇḍa* V.3.121–24, for a narrative to the same e ect.

14. He notes that it is di cult presently to understand the Vedas, and great commentators who have interpreted them have construed contradictory explanations (he has the *Vedānta Sūtras* commentarial tradition in mind here); moreover, there are portions of the Vedas that are unavailable (*anu* 12). The *Bhāgavata* a rms that “the Vedas speak incomprehensibly” (*parokṣa*; XI.3.21) . There is a narrative in the *Varāha Purāṇa* (chapter 171) about how the meanings of the Vedas were covered because of the curse of Gautama Muni.

15. See also *Skanda Purāṇa* V.3.17–28 and 5.16.33, 40–44.

16. *Skanda Purāṇa*, reference not given, quoted in *Tattva Sandarbha anu* 16.3.

17. *Śiva Purāṇa* VII.1.1.37–38; *Agni Purāṇa* 60.16–18, 21–22; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* III.4.2–5.

18. Jīva quotes a verse from the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* here, without verse number (*anu* 21).

19. *Kūrma Purāṇa Pūrva* 52.19–20.

20. A good example of this is the story of Vṛtra (*Bhāgavata* VI.9–12), which takes many varied contours in the chronological progression of the Vedic and post-Vedic texts.

21. See XI.7.24, XV.6.10–12.

22. Much of the endless conjecture and di erence of opinion among scholars results from assigning old dates to an entire text on the basis of an archaic reference, which might simply be an ancient, well-preserved fragment in a later compilation. Equally problematic is the reverse tendency of assigning a much later date to an entire text on the basis of a more recent datable reference such as a dynasty of the historical period, which might in fact be a much later interpolation in an older text.

23. The verse deemed most authoritative in this regard is *Bhāgavata* XI.5.32. See Dāsa, *Tattva Sandarbha*, appendix 1, 341, for further references.

24. Most especially in the post-1960s period through ISKCON, popularly known as the Hare Krishna Movement, and its by now various disa liated o shoots (see Bryant and Ekstrand 2004 and other scholarship on ISKCON).

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A Note About the Author

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* In this section, I have used parentheses for both Sanskrit-to-English and English-to-

Sanskrit translations; I have used brackets when I have added some wording into the text for clari cation purposes and when giving a common name for

a lesser-known one.

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